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SHAKESPEARE—BACON



SHAKESPEARE—BACON

AN ESSAY



LONDON

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE	1

CHAPTER II.

WHAT WAS FRANCIS BACON?	32
-----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

BACON'S ELIZABETHAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE	53
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

A CARICATURE OF SOME NOTABLE ELIZABETHAN POET	71
---	----

CHAPTER V.

THE SUBJECT OF THE FOREGOING CARICATURE	83
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE'S MASQUE	98
-------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

CRITICISM OF THE PRINCE'S MASQUE	118
--	-----

APPENDIX.

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	139
-----------------------------------	-----

<i>Postscript</i>	148
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SHAKESPEARE—BACON

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING SHAKESPEARE

THE biographical evidence concerning Shakespeare may be roughly divided into two classes—internal, and external or circumstantial. The latter class again may be divided into two sub-classes, one to embrace all evidence that seems either equivocal or positively misleading, the other to include such evidence only as tends to disclose the true author. To the former of these sub-classes belong title-pages, entries in the Stationers' Register and so forth. That these are not to be trusted will hardly be disputed by anyone who is aware of the spurious credentials of *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, for example, or *The London Prodigal*. Each of these plays has "William Shakespeare" or "W. Shakespeare" printed

on its title-page, and one of them is entered on the Stationers' Register as having been "written by him." Yet neither, it is all but certain, has even a respectable claim to be included in the canon of Shakespeare. The most important document belonging to this category is Francis Meres' "Discourse" called *Palladis Tamia*. After having compared Shakespeare to Plautus, Seneca, and Ovid (especially the latter, whose "wittie soule" is said to live again in the "mellifluous Shakespeare"), Meres proceeds to give a list of his great contemporary's literary works before September, 1598. The list, which was doubtless by no means exhaustive, includes: *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, "sugred" *Sonnets*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well that Ends Well* (?), *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Merchant of Venice*. An output so large and so varied would seem to imply an apprenticeship to letters at once deliberate, industrious, and of several years' duration. But the point which chiefly concerns us at present is that Meres probably used the term Shakespeare much in the same way as our reading public is accustomed

to speak not of Mrs. Lewes but of George Eliot. Examples of this class of document are plentiful enough, but as they are mostly useless for our present purpose we will pass to the other sub-class of external evidence. A number of our witnesses are sure to be objected to by one Shakespeare scholar or another. When Thomas Nash about the year 1589 testifies that one born "to the trade of *noverint*" (i.e. one whose father was a lawyer) was the author of a tragedy called *Hamlet*, and largely concerned with the theme of revenge, some of our teachers will have it that not Shakespeare's early study of *Hamlet* was intended, but the now lost *Hamlet* of Kyd or somebody else. Edmund Spenser again about the same time, familiarly alludes to some well-known contemporary poet in terms which suggest that the latter was Spenser's equal socially. One of the first of living authorities on Spenser is or was of opinion—rightly so I think—that Shakespeare was the contemporary in question. But this is strenuously denied by other authorities. At no very distant date maybe, Gabriel Harvey, Joseph Hall, John Donne, and several others (not always under their own names) will have to be recognised by Shakespeare's biographers as among

their most valuable coadjutors. At present however the relevancy of most of these witnesses would have to be maintained by pages of tiresome controversy. Fortunately my argument though it cannot consent to leave them unnoticed, can afford to dispense with their aid. I shall therefore endeavour to confine myself as far as possible to testimony which no impartial judge would rule out of court. First in order of date comes *Venus and Adonis*, published in 1593 but written earlier, possibly much earlier.

One of the guarantors of its fitness for publication was no less a person than the Archbishop of Canterbury who had once been tutor to Francis Bacon. The tone of its dedication to the Earl of Southampton if somewhat egotistical, is that of one well-bred man addressing another. Besides taking for granted that it was in his power to "honour" his noble friend, the author (who is commonly supposed to have begun and ended his earthly career as one of the bourgeoisie of a petty market town in the Midlands) goes out of his way to proclaim his aversion to vulgar ideals, for he adopts as his motto the verses of Ovid :

Vilia miretur vulgus : mihi flavus Apollo¹
Pocula Castalia plena ministrat aqua.

Again W. C(lark)'s *Polimanteia* 1595, intimates that Shakespeare was not merely a "schollar," but also a member of one or more of the three English "Universities," "Cambridge, Oxford, and the Innes of Court."² That Shakespeare passed for a scholar is also attested (as Halliwell Phillipps has somewhere observed) by a passage in *Camden's Remaines* which intimates that Marlowe was helped by Shakespeare (necessarily before June 1593) to render Catullus into English.³ In 1609 *Troilus and Cressida* made its appearance with a satirical preface by "a never writer," which pretends that the play had long been kept in dignified seclusion unsullied by the "smoaky breath of the multitude." It also warned the public

¹ Ben Jonson's translation (of which we shall hear more) is :

Kneel hinds to trash : me let bright Phœbus swell
With cups full flowing from the Muses' well.

The motto prefixed to *An Apologie for Poetrie* 1595, is *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*. Its author therefore seems to have felt much the same aversion to the common burgher as Shakespeare.

² *Polimanteia* 1595. The Rev. J. N. Halpin seems to have been one of the first to note the significance of this reference to Shakespeare.

³ *Remaines Concerning Britain* 1614, p. 44. The first edition of the *Remaines* (1605) does not contain any such passage. Compare Shakespeare's "devour the way" (2 *Henry IV*, act I, sc. 1) with Catullus's *viam vorabit* (Poetae Tenero).

that a time was surely coming when that and similar plays of Shakespeare would no longer be on "sale" at any price. All which points, not to the commercial motive of a company of actors, but to caste feeling¹ in a man of "condition" more than half ashamed of catering for the public stage. In a short piece of Henry Chettle's called *England's Mourning Garment*, Shakespeare is designated by the name Melicert on one page, and on another, Melicert—the same Melicert I have no doubt—is mentioned along with Sir Philip Sidney as if both belonged to the same courtly set or coterie.²

¹ It is usually believed that "grand possessors wills" in this preface denotes the Globe Company. But there is really no reason to suppose that the Globe Company was in the habit of giving itself "grand" airs. And as for the word "possessors," if it denoted Heminge Condell & Co., how was it that *Troilus and Cressida* so narrowly escaped being altogether excluded from the First Folio? What the precise value of "grand possessors wills" may have been I cannot say, unless indeed a single possessor with two wills were intended. But that that part of the sneer was meant for the bearer of the motto *vilia miretur vulgus* may I think be taken for granted. The suggestion in the same preface that the word "plays" might well have been replaced by "pleas," appears to indicate some sort of relation between Shakespeare and the legal profession. Nor is it without significance that the whole preface was immediately suppressed, at the instance no doubt of someone in authority.

² *England's Mourning Garment* 1603, B 3, and D 3. I am one of those who hold that the relation, personal as well as literary, between Shakespeare and Sidney was very much closer than is generally

Another useful witness to the social as well as literary distinction of the author of *Venus and Adonis* is Thomas Heywood sometime Fellow of Peterhouse Cambridge, who after having deferentially acknowledged that his own lines were "not worthy" the patronage of Shakespeare, goes on rather in the manner of an obsequious retainer, to warn the publisher Jaggard that Shakespeare was seriously displeased with him for having "presumed to make so bold with his (Shakespeare's) name."¹

This is only a portion of the external evidence that might be brought forward for the purpose of showing, first that Shakespeare must have received a classical education, and second that he must have been what our grandfathers would have called "a supposed. The affinity between the two might be made evident by collecting a number of striking coincidences of which the following may serve as examples. The style of *Love's Labour's Lost*, earliest perhaps of Shakespeare's plays, is "imitated," according to Coleridge, from the *Arcadia*. *King Lear* probably owes its Gloucester incidents to a story in the same prose poem. Falstaff's "Have I caught (thee) my heavenly jewel?" is, as Dr. Grosart points out, the first line of one of the *Astrophel and Stella* songs.

¹ Heywood wrote this says Dyce, in a postscript to his *Apology for Actors* in 1612. By which time "Mr. William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon in the countie of Warwick gent" had gone back, or was on the point of going back, to spend the remainder of his days amongst vulgar relations and friends at Stratford. An attempt at a biography of this "gentleman" will be found in the Appendix.

person of quality." But our curiosity will be better spent upon the mass of evidence which points, this way to Shakespeare's assumption of some sort of mask or alias, that way to a convention of reticence about him on the part of his contemporaries. Robert Greene, who died in September 1592, is one of the earliest recognised witnesses to Shakespeare's growing popularity. The accredited interpretation of Greene's allusion to Shakespeare, as an "upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide" etc.,¹ altogether ignores the idea of Shakespeare's having *disguised* himself in a skin which was not his own. But surely the innuendo that Shakespeare habitually concealed himself behind some player or other is at least as obvious as that he had a trick of helping himself freely to the plots etc. of other dramatists.

My next witness shall be John Davies of Hereford, who in his *Scourge of Folly* (c. 1611), after intimating that Shakespeare's wit had served to enrich others rather than himself, characterises

¹ The phrase "tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide" parodies a passage in the original version of *3 Henry VI*, act I, scene 4, where the Duke of York taunts Queen Margaret with being really not a woman at all, but a tiger disguised as a woman.

poetry, *i.e.* contemporaneous poetry, as “a worke of darkness”¹ in the sense of a secret work, certainly not in disparagement. Davies loved poetry and poets too well for that.

The anonymous author of *Wit's Recreations*, in a kindly epigram “To Mr. William Shake-speare” says:

Shake-speare we must be silent in thy praise
'Cause our encomions will but blast thy bayes
Which envy could not.²

Heylin in his *Microcosmos* must have adopted this peculiar method of showing respect to the greatest of our poets, or he would hardly have omitted Shakespeare's name from his list of the famous poets of the “British Isles.”³

¹ *Scourge of Folly* London, p. 234. Compare description of Chronomastix' “Printer” and “Compositor” in *The Prince's Masque* chap. vi, *infra*.

² *Wit's Recreations* London 1640, epigram 25. This epigram was probably written many years before 1640. It may be observed that the existence of an etiquette of silence about Shakespeare would go far to invalidate inferences as to the date of Shakespeare's literary début which Malone and others have drawn from the fact that Elizabethan critics—Webbe, Puttenham, and especially Sir J. Harington—wrote as if Shakespeare were wholly unknown to them. Whether we shall ever be able to say when Shakespeare “commenced poet” is doubtful. Most likely 1580 is much nearer the mark than 1590.

³ HEYLIN'S *Microcosmos* Oxford 1633, p. 472. The list omits Jonson and others on the ground probably that they were almost exclusively dramatic poets. But Shakespeare's non-dramatic poetry was both well

Edward Bolton in the earliest existing sketch of his *Hypercritica*, written probably five or ten years before the First Folio of Shakespeare was published, does not omit that notable name from the catalogue of those who had enriched "our tongue" with models of English verse. But after having mentioned "Shakespeare, Beaumont, and other writers for the stage," he thinks it necessary to remind himself that their names required to be "tenderly used in this argument." What Bolton meant by *tender usage* becomes pretty clear when we discover that he like Heylin, ultimately excluded the name of Shakespeare and certain other writers for the stage from the published version of his *Hypercritica*.¹

This is not the place for a thorough examination of the sphinx Ben Jonson. Yet is he far too important a witness to be passed over even at this early stage of the inquiry.² Some nine years after

known and greatly admired. It would seem therefore that there must have been some other reason for omitting his name from a list which included Daniel's, Sir John Harington's, etc.

¹ *Hypercritica* 1610-18. Reprinted in Haslewood's *Arte of English Poesie* 1815, pp. 246-251, and xvi. Francis Bacon, it may be observed in passing, is far more highly praised—not it is true as poet—in the published version than in the first sketch.

² In my opinion, founded at first on mere considerations of style, Jonson is responsible for the quickly suppressed preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, as well as for the Heminge and Condell addresses of the First Folio.

the appearance (1609) of the *Troilus and Cressida* preface above noticed came the Drummond "Conversations." Drummond, a poet himself as well as an admirer of Shakespeare, must have been eager for anecdotes about the man whom Jonson (afterwards) called his "beloved master." On such a theme one would have expected a deluge of Shakespeareana at Hawthornden. Yet if the record is to be trusted Jonson hardly broke silence on the subject of Shakespeare throughout the whole of his stay with Drummond. Why? I submit because he recognised the obligation expressed in *Wit's Recreations* — "Shakespeare, we must be silent in thy praise" etc., as still binding.¹

We seem to catch the reflection of a similar feeling in the laborious apology which stands at the head of the great Jonsonian Ode to Shakespeare.²

¹ As to these "Conversations," see Masson's *Life of Drummond* 1873, p. 104, *et passim*. Professor Masson says (p. 171) that Drummond's collection of books (including some by Bacon) is still preserved in the Library of Edinburgh University. It would be interesting to see whether Drummond has annotated any of Bacon's works, the *Advancement of Learning* for example.

² To draw no envy Shakespeare on thy name
Am I thus ample to thy book and fame;
While I confess thy writings to be such
As neither man nor muse can praise too much.
'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways

The studied ambiguity of the passage is very remarkable. "Envy" I take to be the *livor* of Ovid—ill-will or reproach. How Jonson's splendid praise might have been the means of drawing reproach upon Shakespeare; whether Jonson was justified in introducing the element of banter (*e.g.* upon the name Shake-speare) on such an occasion; what excuse he had to offer for his insinuation of "small Latin and less Greek," these and the like are questions we need not at present discuss.

But the most important party to this convention of silence is Francis Bacon, whose reticence unlike that of Jonson and so many others persisted even in 1623 and after. If Bacon had disapproved of everything connected with the stage, we might have been less surprised at his evident determination to

Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise ;
For silliest ignorance on these may light,
Which when it sounds at best, but echoes right,
Or blind affection which doth ne'er advance
The truth, but gropes and urgeth all by chance ;
Or crafty malice might pretend this praise
And think to ruin, where it seem'd to raise.
These are as some infamous bawd or whore
Should praise a matron ; what could hurt her more ?
But thou art proof against them, and indeed
Above the ill fortune of them or the need.
I therefore will begin : Soul of the Age ! etc.

ignore Shakespeare. But Bacon's partiality for things theatrical is demonstrable. It betrays itself in the unusual number and variety of the tropes and figures which he borrowed from the stage. It is shown in his advocacy of acting as a serviceable exercise for youth. As an old man he is reported to have risked his health rather than be absent from a dramatic entertainment at Gray's Inn.¹ As a young man he is known as will be shown by and by, to have been himself a purveyor of such entertainments. When we consider moreover that for him as for Shakespeare, the pageant of human life was an unfailing source of delight, and the development of human character the most fascinating element of that pageant,² our surprise at his silence becomes importunate. It is incredible that a man of Bacon's extensive reading and poetic taste³ should never have come in contact with Shakespeare (who must have been intimate with many of Bacon's friends, and probably lived for years within a mile or so of Bacon's chambers) or any of his productions. Equally in-

¹ *Gray's Inn* by W. R. DOUTHWAITE 1886, p. 235.

² His *Henry VII* and the various editions of the *Essays* are sufficient to prove this.

³ Concerning Bacon's poetic taste much will be said hereafter.

credible is it that he should have failed to appreciate both these and their author. What if Bacon's silence like that of Bolton, were due not to dislike or indifference, but to intimacy and affection? Of several possible solutions this is the least unlikely, for the self-revelations of Shakespeare's poems and plays harmonise well with what we know of the author of the *Advancement of Learning* (1605).

We will begin with "natural philosophy," where if anywhere Bacon might be supposed to have been far in advance of his contemporary Shakespeare. A not very rigorous examination of the *Advancement* however shows that Bacon's science in 1605 was as delightfully vague, as greatly beholden to poetry,¹ as little controlled by experiment, as indifferent to the up-to-date "natural philosophy" of the age, as was the science of Shakespeare. It was Shakespeare who said "Ignorance is the Curse of God, knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to Heaven." And Bacon seems to have been penetrated

¹ The mother idea of the *Novum Organum* was a conviction—apt enough to take possession of one whom Davies characterised as Bellamour of the Muse "deckt" with "Baies" and habitually pledged in "[Helicon]"—that man might indefinitely enlarge his dominion over nature, if only he could be persuaded to apply to the material world methods analogous to the imitative processes of the art of poetry.

by the same thought, for he speaks more than once of recovering by means of knowledge, privileges of which he imagined the human race to have been deprived by the Fall.

In politics again, Shakespeare was evidently of the same way of thinking as Bacon. The latter was a loyal admirer of his sovereign, so was the former. The former was an aristocrat in feeling with a strong bias to conservatism,¹ so was the latter. Both of them were intensely patriotic, and each had probably convinced himself that though gradual modification was a necessity, violent innovation was perhaps the worst disease of the body politic. Shakespeare would be as unlikely as Bacon to be carried off his feet by an enthusiasm for this social panacea or that political Utopia.

In the article of religion Shakespeare was probably just an average Protestant. For him the secular life would be so satisfying, and under the transfiguration of poetry so radiant and so many-coloured, that the things of religion may well have appeared tame pallid and almost superfluous. If he

¹ The Jack Cade of 2 *Henry VI* is almost sufficient to prove this, the historical Cade having been it is all but certain, a very different person.

ever lost his temper over questions of faith, it can only have been under the exasperating influence of some unusually truculent fanatic. In these respects Bacon's views were probably quite undistinguishable from those of Shakespeare.

In the domain of art it is usually taken for granted that Bacon was divided from Shakespeare by an almost impassable gulf. But Bacon's opinions about poetry (to say nothing of his poetics) are nearly allied to those of Shakespeare. Bacon holds that the chief function of poetry is "to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul; by reason whereof there is agreeable to the spirit of man a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety than can be found in the nature of things."¹ Do not Shakespeare's creations necessarily imply an almost identical conception? Bacon will have it that poets along with historians are the best of ethical (as distinguished from theological) teachers; and declares we must go to them if we want to become acquainted with every variety of human character; to understand

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 343.

how characters are modified by sex, age, climate, beauty, deformity; to learn how men and women are moved and troubled by the "affections," passions, and so forth.¹ Is it not more than probable that Shakespeare was of one mind with Bacon in these respects also? Bacon held poetry to be a spontaneous growth, a thing born as flowers are "of the lust of the earth." Is not much of Shakespeare's poetry an admirable illustration of this? Bacon as he grew older came to think less and less highly of poetry.² Why did Shakespeare abandon his poetic offspring to the care of strangers, if not because he also had changed his mind concerning the value of imaginative work?

In the matter of general reading there should be no great difficulty in compiling out of the *Advancement* quite a respectable list of Bacon's earlier

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 434-8.

² Evidence for this statement is given in a note to page 41. One reason for the popular belief that Bacon was essentially prosaic, is to be found in the particular section of the *Advancement of Learning* formally allotted to poetry. That section whilst recognising poetry as a spontaneous and imaginative representation of human life (human character modified and set in motion as aforesaid) ignores lyric poetry altogether, and carefully avoids mentioning the word "dramatic." As Bacon's relation to poetry will be discussed hereafter, it is sufficient at present to hint that the poetry section of the *Advancement* was intended to conceal the author's real attitude towards poetry and poets.

favourites. On the whole he evidently greatly preferred Latin poets, historians, biographers, and philosophers,¹ to Greek, with one noticeable exception. His favourite book, judging more especially from frequency of quotation in the *Advancement*, was the Bible, and next to the Bible, Plutarch. Amongst the moderns quoted or otherwise noticed in that work are Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Ariosto, Rabelais, and Montaigne. There is scarcely a trace in the whole work of any acquaintance with the Greek tongue. But English, French, or Latin translations would probably enable its author to compass many of the thoughts of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, Diogenes Laertius, Lucian, and the other Greek authors to whom he refers.² So much for Bacon's reading down to the year 1605 or thereabouts. As for Shakespeare's, Greek authors undoubtedly held a very much lower place in his

¹ Virgil and Ovid, Tacitus and Livy, Suetonius, Cicero, and Seneca.

² True, Shakespeare used the English chroniclers quite as extensively as Plutarch, but his respect for them if he had any, is exceedingly small as compared with his respect for Plutarch. It has been said that Shakespeare follows North's translation, errors and all. Whether Bacon anywhere quotes the same passages and falls into the same errors I am not able to say. There can have been no necessity for either Bacon or Shakespeare to have recourse to North, if only because Amyot's French must have been perfectly intelligible to both.

affections than did the Latins. With him also as with Bacon, Plutarch and the Bible seem to have taken precedence of all other books in his library. For the rest, though it might be rash to assert that in the first decade of the seventeenth century Bacon and Shakespeare would have been in perfect accord as to the "hundred best books," we may safely assume that Shakespeare's qualifications as a linguist were much the same as those of Bacon,¹ and also that Shakespeare no less than Bacon, was an omnivorous reader at a time when books of any sort of merit were comparatively rare.

¹ Jonson's suggestion that Shakespeare's "Latin" was "small," is probably responsible directly or indirectly for a good deal of misconception about Shakespeare's education. Before Coleridge's time another Jonsonian phrase—Shakespeare "wanted arte"—seems to have been accepted as an axiom. Few educated people probably believe that Shakespeare was an inspired machine rather than an artist. And no one who reads his poems and plays especially the earlier ones, attentively and without obstinate prepossession, can fail to perceive that he must have had at least a serviceable knowledge, not only of Latin but also of French. As to Latin indeed, the etymological intelligence displayed in his handling of words derived from that language is conclusive. Mr. George Brandes in the first number of *Cosmopolis*, contends that Shakespeare when describing Desdemona's handkerchief, must have had in his mind the original of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. But Mr. Brandes' reasoning is not unassailable, and in the absence of cogent proof to the contrary I am disposed to think that Shakespeare's Italian was quite as small as that of Bacon.

In the matter of special reading Bacon can hardly have escaped making acquaintance with the more important law books current during the period of his legal apprenticeship. Judging from his poems and plays, which abound in legal phraseology and are often marred by intricate legal technicalities,¹ Shakespeare must have spent many tedious hours poring over the same set of law books.

Anything like demonstration of the accuracy of the foregoing parallelisms between Bacon and Shakespeare in science, politics, religion, poetics, and reading or studies, will hardly be expected, since that would involve the collection and analysis of a

¹ There is no need for me to labour a theme which has been well treated by several competent observers. One of the latest appreciations of the evidence bearing upon this point is that of a *Saturday Reviewer*. "Much of Shakespeare's law may have been acquired from three books easily accessible to him . . . but much of it could only have emanated from one who had an intimate acquaintance with legal proceedings . . . We quite agree with Mr. — that Shakespeare's legal knowledge is not what could be picked up in an attorney's office, but could only have been learned by an actual attendance in the courts, at a pleader's chambers, and on circuit, or by associating intimately with members of the bench and bar. But even on this supposition it is not easy to explain his minute and undeviating accuracy in a subject where no layman who has indulged in such copious and ostentatious display of legal technicalities has ever yet succeeded in keeping himself from tripping."—*Saturday Review* 24th July, 1897, pp. 92-3.

multitude of general and more or less elusive impressions, derived not from any particular poem or play of Shakespeare, but from the bulk of his recognised work. Yet tangible evidence of like import is not altogether wanting. For example, when Shakespeare as we know him in quartos and folios, needs an interpreter, how is it that Francis Bacon is almost certain to be appealed to on all sorts of topics, and that by critics entirely above the suspicion of either craze or charlatanism?¹ Again, though many of the curious coincidences between Bacon and Shakespeare might be explained as manifestations of the time-spirit, not a few remain which even when taken singly point to something very like direct intercommunication. When we are informed that both Bacon and Shakespeare misquote Aristotle in the same unexpected way,² we naturally ask for the dates of *Troilus and Cressida* (which contains Shakespeare's mistake) and the *Advancement of*

¹ I use these words advisedly, for there are undoubtedly knaves as well as cranks Baconian.

² Mr. Aldis Wright seems to have been the first to draw attention to this coincidence in his Clarendon Press edition of the *Advancement of Learning* (p. 321). It was also the subject of several letters in the *Athenæum* (December 1892), one of which contains a suggestion that both Bacon and Shakespeare may have derived their mistake from Erasmus.

Learning (which contains Bacon's), in order to judge of the probability of imitation on the one side or the other. So with the resemblance between Bacon's *Essay of Gardens* and Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, which drew from Mr. Spedding the following comment: "The scene in *Winter's Tale* where Perdita presents the guests with flowers . . . has some expressions which, if the essay had been printed somewhat earlier would have made me suspect that Shakespeare had been reading it."¹ So with numerous other coincidences recorded in various annotated editions of Shakespeare, the *Shakespeare Commentaries* of Gervinus, the *Bacon* of Kuno Fischer, etc.² Many of these coincidences are extremely interesting, but as their relevancy can be

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding vi, 486.

² The following passage from the rather unsatisfactory English translation (1883) of Gervinus will serve as an indication of his view: "In Bacon's works we find a multitude of moral sayings and maxims of experience from which the most striking mottoes might be drawn for every Shakespearean play, aye, for every one of his principal characters, testifying to a remarkable harmony in their comprehension of human nature." From the excellent English translation of Kuno Fischer's *Bacon*, these passages are worth quoting: "To the parallels between them (*i.e.* Bacon and Shakespeare) . . . belong the similar relation of both to antiquity, their affinity to the Roman mind, and their diversity from the Greek" (p. 207). "Bacon would have man studied in his individuality as a product of nature and history, in

estimated by anyone who cares to consult a decently furnished library, I shall pass them by in favour of a few selected observations of my own.¹

More than half of the 87th Sonnet of Shakespeare is wholly unintelligible without something more than a bowing acquaintance with what lawyers call the "Doctrine of uses," especially that branch of it which deals with "Failure of consideration."

Bacon appears to have been impressed by the fact that a little saffron suffices to colour a large volume of liquid.² Shakespeare makes play with this property of saffron in *All's Well that Ends Well*.³

Several editions of Bacon's *Essays* appear to have been published without his consent. Yet Bacon was

every respect determined by natural and historical influences, by external and internal conditions. And exactly in the same spirit has Shakespeare understood man and his destiny. . . . The great interest that Bacon took in portraits of character is proved by the fact that he attempted to draw them himself. With a few felicitous touches he sketched the characters of Julius and Augustus Cæsar, and his view of both was similar to that of Shakespeare" (p. 211). Of Professor Fischer's views concerning Bacon's poetics it is unnecessary to say more than that they are to a large extent based upon the poetry section of the *Advancement*, which was probably intended to mislead.

¹ I am not aware that any of these resemblances has been noted before. This is what is meant by "my own."

² *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding v, 419, 421.

³ *All's Well*, act IV, scene 5.

a lawyer backed by powerful connections. Shakespeare too suffered many things at the hands of "piratical publishers," without attempting it would seem to obtain redress. Why one or two of these pirates were not severely punished by way of example, is hard to understand except on the hypothesis that their victim was afraid of that publicity¹ which legal proceedings never fail to involve.

Certain conceptions expressed in Bacon's *Essay of Deformity* seem implicit in the character of Shakespeare's *Richard the Third*. Richard has his "revenge of nature" for making him deformed. He is also "extreme bold," keen to "observe the weakness of others," etc. His deformity again must I think be supposed to have "quenched jealousy" (*i.e.* suspicion) in those who, had he been comely of person, would early have taken some effectual precaution against his evident ambition.

Bacon's first appearance as dramatic artist occurred somewhere about 1587, in a play called

¹ Apprehension of publicity would serve to explain Shakespeare's all but total abstention from commendatory verses generally, as well as his extraordinary silence on royal or notable deaths, marriages, etc. To have given utterance to his own thoughts and feelings would have been to risk a more or less public disclosure of his personality.

the *Misfortunes of Arthur*, wherein "dumb shows" and a chorus play noteworthy parts.¹ Shakespeare is generally supposed to have made his *début* as dramatic author about the same time.²

Bacon entertained the idea of writing some sort of history of Henry VIII, and actually applied to headquarters for State papers relating to the period.³ Shakespeare contributed—we know not exactly what or when⁴—to a historical drama on the same subject.

In the course of some interesting observations on history considered as an art, Bacon confesses

¹ The black letter copy intimates that the "dumb shows" were partly devised by Francis Bacon. That Bacon had no hand in other parts of the play should not be inferred from this intimation.

² The date and extent of Shakespeare's contribution to *Pericles* (with its dumb show, chorus, and procession of knights reminding one of the fifth dumb show of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*) will never perhaps be settled.

³ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding xiv, pp. 399, 405, 436. Chamberlain writing in February 1623 declares that if Bacon's *Henry VIII* "might come out *after his own manner*" he (Chamberlain) though full of affairs would find time to read it. Evidently Chamberlain was afraid Bacon might not write in his "own" manner on this occasion. What did he mean by the word "own"?

⁴ As to the "*when*," it has yet to be proved that Shakespeare's additions were made before the Globe Theatre conflagration of 1613, wherein according to Wotton "nothing did perish but wood and straw and a few forsaken cloaks."

to a preference for borrowing a ready-made outline or "simple narrative"; so that freed from the drudgery of constructing a plot for himself, the artist should be able to concentrate his energies upon what Bacon assumed to be the more congenial task of enriching what he had borrowed "with counsels, speeches, and notable particularities."¹ Shakespeare's preferences in this matter may be gathered from his practice. The feeble plots and faulty work of other hands which often disfigure his plays, compel the reflection that Shakespeare (like Bacon) loved to enrich with "counsels, speeches" etc., and grudged the trouble of construction.

These parallelisms, though far less interesting than many recorded by Aldis Wright, Furness, Gervinus, Kuno Fischer and others, are among the most suggestive of those observed by myself. That they are not the only things of the kind which have occurred to me goes without saying. I hardly ever read a play or even an act of Shakespeare, without being strongly reminded at one point or another of something in the works, especially the earlier works of Bacon.

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding vi, 17 et seq.

To sum up. The inferences to be drawn from the external evidence concerning Shakespeare are these : that he was well born ; that his father was a lawyer ; that he had received a classical as distinguished from an elementary or merely commercial education ; that he moved in "good society," his social status being equal probably to that of Sir P. Sidney ; that there was a convention among his contemporaries to respect some secret—say an incognito—which nearly concerned him. As for the internal evidence, the most interesting of its disclosures is the probability of a personal intimacy between Shakespeare and Bacon, and what is more important, the existence of a strong family resemblance between their mental processes.

There may be students of Shakespeare who are quite content to believe that the notion of founding a hope of immortality on anything but the narrative poems,¹ never entered his head. Some incredulous persons however have been heard to speak disrespectfully of the hypothesis that Shakespeare lacked culture and taste to discern that his plays

¹ The sonnets I take it were never intended for publication, and the publication of them probably caused their author the keenest annoyance.

had no modern rivals¹ and would have been likely to "yield more lustre and reputation to his name" than all the rest of his poetry together. It has even been held outside Bedlam that what Prospero felt for the fascinating "book" which he threatened to bury "fathoms deep in the earth," Shakespeare must have felt for some at least of his delightful comedies, to say nothing of histories and tragedies. True, play-making as a profession may have been thought ungentlemanly if not disreputable.² Yet Shakespeare aided by friends could surely have found some way to dissociate³ himself from a profession he probably despised, without imperilling the integrity of all his plays and the very existence of many.

Shakespeare's apparent neglect of his plays might perhaps be explained by purely secular considerations. The emotional chill which rarely fails to accompany the creeping illness we call age was no doubt one of these considerations. Another was the

¹ They were in truth among "the glories of the time and for the light were made." Milton calls them "unvalued," in the sense we are told of invaluable. But can Milton really have meant nothing more than that?

² Compare Sonnet 91.

³ In this connection the intimation of John Davies that Shakespeare's "wit" had enriched others but not himself, is significant.

growth of a widespread feeling, coinciding perhaps with presage of civil troubles, that English books would never be "citizens of the world,"¹ that Latin was the "universal language," and Latin books the only books that "would live." Again Shakespeare was undoubtedly a fervent admirer of his sovereign, and that sovereign—who it will be remembered was once a poet himself, as well as an enthusiast for poetry—had come to look upon "the skill or craft of making" as becoming enough in light-hearted youth, but quite beneath the dignity of full-grown men with other and in his opinion more serious affairs to attend to.² Along with this change in the head of the State came the change in the spiritual atmosphere wherein literature moved and had her being. In the days of Queen Elizabeth this atmosphere had been dainty, gallant, romantic, poetical. By 1616 or thereabouts, its character had altered considerably, and a being of Shakespeare's extreme susceptibility

¹ Compare Bacon's letter (1623) to Prince Charles (*Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding xiv, p. 436), and his dedication (1625) of the *Essays* to Buckingham.

² Charles I took precisely this view of the matter (see Dedicatory Epistle to *Cooper's Hill*); and James I went so far in the same direction as to exclude his own poems and poetical essays altogether from the collected edition (1616) of his *Works*. With him as with others, the poet was gradually effaced by the pedant.

cannot fail to have been profoundly influenced by both these changes. But progressive glaciation of the feelings, expectation of a shrinkage in the currency of our tongue, change of mind in the English Solomon, concomitant change of spiritual atmosphere, do not suffice to account for a neglect so extraordinary. There must have been sincerity, nobility, "a touch of rareness" about Shakespeare's affection for poetry, which nothing but a new and incompatible emotion could ever have subdued.¹ To compare the real with the ideal, Prospero never could

¹ Bacon's affection for poetry also seems to have suffered eclipse. But in his case there is no need to grope for explanations. After 1621 his mind was inflamed with desire to bring about "the happy match between the mind of man," and the nature or inward constitution of things. Concerning the "issue of so honourable a match" his hopes knew no bounds. As a youth he had seen visions, and set them forth in charmed words: "Printing; artillery; the needle; what a change have these three made in the world in these times. And these were but stumbled upon by chance. Therefore no doubt the sovereignty of man lieth hid in knowledge wherein many things are reserved which kings with their treasure cannot buy, nor with their force command, their spies and intelligencers can give no news of them, their seamen and discoverers cannot sail where they grow. Now we govern nature in opinions, but are thrall to her in necessities. But if we would be led by her in invention, we should command her in action." (*Conference of Pleasure*, 1592). An old man now, he thought he was on the point of discovering a master-key to every department of Nature's workshop. From this time onwards the centre of his affections, "that for which he lived," was the *Great Instauration*.

have resolved to abandon his "magic" or bury his "book," if he had not aspired¹ to preside over the nuptials of his only daughter with the heir to the kingdom—the glorious kingdom as he pictured it to himself—of Naples. But Shakespeare's new love; what was it? In what direction, what Neapolis, did he find it?

¹ Why this aspiration should have involved abjuration and burial is not at first sight apparent. Obviously however some cureless incompatibility between the "book" and the aspiration has to be assumed.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT WAS FRANCIS BACON?

IN considering this question I shall focus attention more or less closely upon the Elizabethan rather than the Jacobean period of Bacon's life, chiefly because he seems to me to have drifted farther and farther away from himself after 1603 or thereabouts.

Before he was sixteen years of age he became an "Ancient" of one of those legal societies which constituted a sort of university on the banks of the Thames, and were technically known as Inns of Court. The particular Inn—Gray's—for which he was entered, appears to have attracted to itself some of the most gifted, accomplished, and restless young men of the age.¹ A considerable number of these nimble spirits may have applied themselves to studies

¹ Gray's Inn was, or was soon to become noted for genius or "wit." Chapman in dedicating a translation of Hesiod (1618) to Bacon, applied the lines *Graviis ingenium, Graviis dedit ore rotundo Musa loqui* etc., "to Gray's Inn wits and orators" in general, and Bacon's "truly Greek inspiration, and absolutely Attic elocution" in particular—Bacon the

which bore some sort of relation to their proper profession. But there must have been a good many youthful Graians whom their parents had reason to suspect of tastes and pursuits which savoured more of the stage than of the law. It is not certain that Bacon's father Sir Nicholas was disappointed with his youngest son's conduct at Gray's. What is certain is that the youth was quickly removed from the atmosphere and associations of the legal institution which had been selected for his education, and sent off to France in the train of the Ambassador Sir Amyas Paulett. He must have spent a year or two about the Court of Henry III, when the unexpected death of his father put an end—by stopping supplies no doubt—as well to the son's newly entered career of diplomatist as to his sojourn in the land of Montaigne, and virtually compelled him to turn his face once more towards the legal profession. Shortly after his arrival in London he set about the composition of an elaborate letter to his maternal uncle the elder Cecil, in which he seems to have

while being about as intimately related to Greece as Shakespeare was. But Chapman idolised Homer and Hesiod, and knew no loftier way of praising the genius of Bacon than by comparing it with that of the Greeks. Ben Jonson (a far better scholar than Chapman) in his well-known ode takes much the same way of eulogising Shakespeare.

asked permission to quit the law for some pursuit or occupation "of more delight."¹ About 1586 however he becomes a "Bencher" of his Inn, mainly no doubt because he was the son of a Lord Keeper, the nephew of a powerful statesman, and above all a *persona grata* to the Queen, who afterwards took to herself credit for having "pulled him over the Bar," as she phrased it. In 1592 he writes to his uncle again in much the same sense as before, but this time with something of menace in his tone. "I will sell all the inheritance that I have . . . and become some sorry bookmaker, or a true pioner" in the "mine of truth."² At first sight this letter might seem to mean that its author was still after some twelve or fourteen years' experience, so disgusted with the legal profession as to have entertained serious thoughts of throwing it up and devoting himself *professionally* to literature.³ As for the "true

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding viii, 13.

² *Ibid.*, 109. Compare also same edition iii, 351.

³ Bacon's extraordinary aptitude for literature reveals itself over and over again in almost everything that he wrote, from the *Conference of Pleasure* (1592), to the *Novum Organum* (1620), and *Henry VII* (1622). Nor was he himself in any doubt as to his true vocation. In the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), for example, he expressly says he was "a man born for literature" (*litteras*) rather than anything else, and "forced (*abreptus*) against his own genius (*contra genium suum*) into

pioneer" portion of the warning, what he had in his mind may have been a romantic yearning after the function of one of the "lights" of the *New Atlantis*,¹ or perhaps a vague idea of extracting "wisdom" out of the literature, especially the poetry of antiquity, and presenting to the world the quintessence thereof in vivid and graceful literary form.² The "sorry bookmaker"³ portion of the announcement how-

affairs, by he knew not what fate." *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding i, 792.

¹ The great heart of the *New Atlantis* was a monumental structure called *Solomon's House*, and it is clear that the idea of some such institution had occurred to Bacon at least as early as 1594. Cf. *Gesta Graiorum* p. 35.

² He was haunted by this idea at the date of the *Advancement of Learning*, for he reverts to it again and again in that work. Cf. *Bacon's Works*, edit. Spedding iii, 345, 453, and 474.

³ The word "sorry" was probably intended to heighten the effect of the nephew's application for some salaried office which should leave him free to cultivate literature as and when he would. Compare "Freedom of brain and body is a poet's music. . . . Indeed the liberty of brain makes a poet . . . when therefore a *reward* is motive it makes the labour like *itself*, servile. Poetry should therefore be undertaken by the free *Professor*, a man sufficient in estate, such a one as need not use flattery to win reward; . . . because while joyfully they should intend their poems, they be too much interrupted with a remembrance of their wants, and be compelled to take a ready course . . . These mischiefs follow a mercenary hope; and therefore be mercenary poets odious, such I mean as are provoked by poverty, and will exact their wages." *Essays and Characters* by John Stephens of Lincoln's Inn, 1615. Compare also "Je sais bien que de nos jours

ever, must have caused serious uneasiness to the recipient of the letter.

Literature as a profession was regarded by most well-born Elizabethans as beneath the dignity of a gentleman. Not that they despised literature in itself. On the contrary many of them are known to have been accomplished men of letters, not only enjoying literature especially poetry as consumers, but also proud of their skill in "making." From the point of view of these *beaux esprits* literature was to be cultivated, not as a means of livelihood, sometimes not even for publication in our sense of the word, but as an ornament, or because "making" was its own reward. Montaigne gave expression to some such mood when he said that a man of good family who addicted himself to literature for so "abject an end as gain" was "unworthy of the

elle (la littérature) est devenue, par la force des choses, une profession ; mais nous devons l'oublier autant que nous pouvons. Nos meilleures pages sont toujours celles que nous avons écrites le plus involontairement, en cessant, pour ainsi dire, d'être des 'professionnels,' des hommes de lettres. Les littératures n'ont jamais été plus belles qu'aux époques où ce n'était pas un métier de faire des livres, . . . et où on n'écrivait enfin que pour soulager son cœur, et non pour écrire. A ces époques-là, il n'y a presque point d'œuvres médiocres, justement parceque il n'y a point de littérature de profession." *Impressions de Théâtre*, 6^{ème} série, par Jules Lemaitre, Paris, 1892.

grace and favour of the Muses." Selden's *Table Talk* is even more to the point: "'Tis ridiculous for a Lord to print verses, 'tis well enough to make them to please himself, but to make them public is foolish." But an impecunious "younger brother" with expensive habits and tastes, could scarcely afford himself the luxury of writing for the mere pleasure of it. So long as he, Bacon, remained a member of the legal profession, he had it in his power¹ both to indulge his genius (as he somewhere phrases it) for literature, and to add to his income without doing violence to his instinct as a man of good family, and indeed without seriously compromising himself in any way. But if he once quitted the "trade of noverint," it was at any rate conceivable—especially to Burleigh, who probably more than suspected his brilliant nephew of having long been "addicted" to literary pursuits²—

¹ Puttenham—assuming that to be the name of the author of *The Arte of English Poesie*, 1589—says he has known "very many notable gentlemen in the Court that have written (poetry understood) commendably, and suppressed it again, or else suffered it to be published *without their owne names to it.*"

² This would help to explain the uncle's tardiness in advancing Bacon. That jealousy or ill-will should have been at the bottom thereof is not likely. Burleigh may have been one of those whom John Stephens had in his eye when he wrote: "Fame and eminence

that he might be driven into the ranks of professional "bookmakers."

To return to the more immediate consideration of Bacon's legal qualifications. The opinion of his mistress the queen, who had excellent means of knowing the truth, was that "in law he could make show of the uttermost that he had," but was "not deep."¹ Certain it is that Bacon was habitually perhaps constitutionally, inaccurate;² peculiarly liable to be ensnared by fanciful analogies; pre-eminently a lover of the magnificent, the coloured, the harmonious; had a passion for beautiful imagery, striking metaphors, decorative illustrations; was possessed of or rather by a vivid imagination; and had made of his memory a rich storehouse of poetical ideas which if not always original, became fraught with new meanings in the subtle process of assimilation.

(as a poet understood) now purchase nothing . . . but an opinion that *Poetry* is his knowledge and that he is fit for nothing else: or some perhaps, nay, the wisest will bestowe compassion, and say, *It is pity such a pregnant wit should endeavour so idly.*" And again: "The base opinion which poetry incurs among us hath been repaid with justice, that is, the discredit of our nation," for it "hath deprived the *public* of more judicious works than be already extant."—*Essays and Characters* by John Stephens of Lincoln's Inn, 1615, essay vii.

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding viii, 297.

² In some of his letters he parades his habit of inaccuracy as if it were rather a merit than otherwise.

No wonder his heart was not in the law, for it is not out of such stuff as this that lawyers are usually made. The wonder is that he should have been promoted as he ultimately was, to the high places of a profession into which he had been "forced against his own genius." But those were days of anomaly. Men were "advanced in the way of their own professions, both the Law and the Gospel,"¹ for reasons which to us seem ludicrous. Sir C. Hatton to take a well-known instance, was raised to the Chancellorship, not for his legal attainments but for graces of person. And Bacon's equally conspicuous promotion must I think have been due in the main to qualifications or deserts which had but little to do with law.²

His promotion cannot have been due to any special aptitude for scientific research, if only because habitual inaccuracy and a liability to be ensnared by fanciful analogies are serious disqualifications for the successful study of astronomy, physics, chemistry etc. Moreover most of the achievements of science in modern times have it would seem been effected

Ben Jonson's Works, edition Cunningham ix, 154.

² The king's point of view in making the promotions alluded to by Jonson was I take it, that capacity for poetry was presumptive evidence of capacity for law, divinity etc. He may have considered himself a striking illustration of the truth of this reasoning.

not by the man who takes "all knowledge for his province," but by the specialist, and Bacon was intolerant of specialisation. Misled by large and unsifted assumptions and carried away by a magnificent imagination, he was at one time fully determined in his own mind that the utmost limits of the knowable might be reached, not slowly and gropingly, but unerringly and perhaps in the next generation. This of itself would be almost sufficient to explain why Bacon's science was so lightly regarded, not by the king alone but by the scientific men of his age.¹ To the true pioneers of science—men who were actually engaged in advancing its limits—co-operation with one who compared with them was only a dreamer of (beautiful) dreams, must have seemed out of the question. Harvey, we are told by Aubrey, "esteemed" Bacon "much for his wit and style, but would not allow him to be a great philosopher." Probably the *Advancement of Learning*

¹ In the country of Galileo Bacon's reception at the hands of contemporary science appears to have been almost rude. In the records of the Accademia dei Lincei, one of the earliest modern foundations for the study of natural science, Bacon's name is said to have been found in a list of rejected candidates for membership. No wonder Bacon after the manner of reformers placed his hopes in posterity, which compared with the fully-developed man of to-day is apt to seem delightfully plastic.

was largely responsible for the scientific boycott of Bacon which seems to have puzzled the late Mr. Spedding and others. The declared object of that work was to promote science, with a view above all to producing material utilities. Yet in it Bacon, with the air of one who had no misgiving as to the propriety of his classification,¹ assigns to "Poesy" a position equal in importance to that vouchsafed to "Philosophy," though philosophy as understood by

¹ When about 1622-3 Bacon came to revise his earlier (published) utterances as to the immense importance of poetry to human knowledge (in the *Advancement* as in *Cymbeline*, "learning" is an exceedingly elastic term), he was evidently dissatisfied with them. (1) In the *Advancement of Learning* (1605) he claims that "for the expressing of affections, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholding to poets more than to philosophers works." In the corresponding place of the revised and enlarged version of 1623 he drops this claim altogether (*Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 346; and i, 521). (2) In the *Advancement* (1605) "Poesy" is declared to be one of the three "goodly fields"—"history" and "experience" being the other two—where "grow observations" concerning the "several characters and tempers of men's natures and dispositions." In the corresponding place of the revised version this commendation is omitted or materially lowered, because poets are so apt to "exceed" the truth (*Ibid.* iii, 434-5; and i, 733). (3) The *Advancement* in discussing the faculty of imagination, rates its product Poesy far more highly than does the revised version, which indeed goes so far in the direction of cheapening Poesy and Imagination as to suggest that Bacon, if he had not been hampered by previous publications, would have deposed both from the high place they still continued to occupy in his system (*Ibid.* iii, 382-3; and i, 615-16; also i, 657).

him included mental and moral science, mathematics, medicine—everything in short that he had not previously treated under the head of “Poesy” or “History.” The work teems with poetical allusions. Dealing with the subject of medicine, the author deems it very much to the purpose to inform the world that “the poets did well to conjoin music and medicine in Apollo, because the office of medicine is but to tune this curious harp of man’s body and reduce it to harmony.”¹ He gravely affirms that the pseudo science of the alchemist was foretold and discredited by the fable of Ixion and the Cloud.² With him what we are accustomed to call “endowment of research” becomes a provision for the encouragement of “experiments appertaining to Vulcan or Dædalus.”³ In one place he asserts that the Great Alexander’s “speeches and answers” were “full of science and the use of science, and that in all variety.” In another that the natural history of

¹ *Bacon’s Works*, edition Spedding iii, 371.

² *Ibid.* 362. He more than half believed that gold might be manufactured by “superinducing” on some other metal the “forms” of yellowness, density, pliability etc. (*Ibid.* and 355).

³ *Ibid.* iii, 325. In a letter to Casaubon he confesses to being more conversant with the thoughts of classical antiquity than with those of the moderns (*Ibid.* xi, 146).

his time, so far as normal phenomena were concerned, was almost all that could be desired.¹

I am far from denying that the world of letters may have regarded Bacon's science with the most profound respect. We know that he was held by at least one of his contemporaries to have "done a great and ever-living benefit to all the children of nature; and to nature herself, in her uttermost extent and latitude; who never before had so noble nor so true an interpreter, or never so inward a secretary of her cabinet."² This was the view of Sir H. Wotton, wit, poet, littérateur, and may be taken to have represented the opinion of literature before as well as after the death of Elizabeth. Even so, the legitimate inference would be, not that Bacon was an authority on natural science, but that he was so perfect a master of the arts of expression as to have succeeded—how, we may not fully understand—in bewitching the judgment of contemporary culture.

It may be urged that I am but beating the air; that no one ever supposed Bacon to have been a pioneer in any particular department of science;

¹ *Ibid.* 330. Pliny, prince of unscientific naturalists, may have been in his mind at the time.

² *Reliquiæ Wottonianæ*, 1685, p. 298.

that his true function was to co-ordinate the various special results obtained by others, to organise not any one science, but science at large. But surely he who should propose to reorganise science ought to have at command an extensive series of verified observations bearing upon the various subjects involved. In the case of Bacon however, there is little or no evidence that his acquaintance in 1605 (or even 1620) with any of the sciences then starting into life was other than popular, vague, unscientific. Galileo would have smiled at his astronomy. Harvey probably did smile at his physiology. The extent of his acquaintance with the properties of air may be gauged by a remark in the *Advancement* implying that it would be just as absurd to attempt to measure or weigh the wind, as to paint it.¹ He sums up Gilbert in terms of contempt, his own contribution to the knowledge of magnetism being on this wise: "There is formed in everything a double nature of good, the one as everything is a total or substantive in itself; the other as it is a part or member of a greater and more general form. Therefore we see the iron in particular sympathy

¹ *Advancement of Learning*, *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 326.

moveth to the loadstone; but yet if it exceed a certain quantity, it forsaketh the affection to the loadstone, and like a good patriot moveth to the earth, which is the region or country of massy bodies."¹

Bacon's "philosophy" in truth was "human" rather than "natural."² There his experience was at once so varied and so wide, his observation so authentic, his intuition so penetrating, that if Wotton had used the word "human" to limit the scope of his eulogium, we should not have winced at his "never before had so noble nor so true an interpreter, or never so inward a secretary of her cabinet."

Yet Bacon's skill in human nature was surpassed by his cunning in human speech. His bosom friend Sir Toby Mathews, after having defied Europe to "muster out" "four men" who "should excel four such as we (English) are able to show, Cardinal Wolsey, Sir Thomas More, Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Francis Bacon," characterises the last as follows :

The fourth was a creature of incomparable abilities of mind, of a sharp and catching apprehension, large and fruit-

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 420, 293.

² The terms are his own. He trisects philosophy into "divine," "natural," and "human."

ful memory, plentiful and sprouting invention, deep and solid judgment for as much as might concern the understanding part. A man so rare in knowledge, of so many several kinds, endued with the facility and felicity of expressing it all, in so elegant, significant, so abundant, and yet so choice and ravishing a way of words, of metaphors, and allusions as perhaps the world hath not seen since it was a world.¹

In this connexion it is interesting to compare Bacon's earlier attitude to poetry on the one hand and to philosophy—the philosophy of Greece—on the other.² Towards the latter his bearing, occasionally insolent and often unjust, was on the whole profoundly antipathetic. Towards poetry it was unmistakably sympathetic.³ His love of poetry reveals itself not directly, not in eloquent phrases of admiration, but in an inveterate, perhaps instinctive habit of appealing to the poets as important authorities on all sorts of questions. In his eyes Virgil was an oracle whose utterances on cosmogony, astronomy, psychology, were of the utmost value. For him Ovid was instinct with knowledge of the

¹ MATHEWS' *Collection of Letters* etc., 1660, "To the Reader."

² For the specious eclecticism of Rome he evidently felt both respect and affection.

³ Both sympathy and antipathy seem to have weakened about the time he became a Privy Councillor (1616).

nature of things. He must have spent days and nights in expounding various pregnant truths which he took to be latent in the *Metamorphoses*. Aristotle on the contrary he not unfrequently treated as an arrogant impostor.¹ Plato was a dreamer, a poet, as well as a philosopher; so the sentence passed upon him was comparatively lenient.² Occasionally indeed Bacon seems to have been spell-bound by poetry. He had warned inquirers after knowledge to be on their guard against those who were wont "to infect their meditations, opinions, and doctrines with some conceits which they have most applied, and given all things else a tincture according to them, utterly untrue and improper"; he had censured Plato for having "intermingled his philosophy with theology," and Aristotle for having mixed his with "logic"; he had sneered at his contemporary Gilbert for having "made a philosophy out of the observations of a loadstone."³ Yet in 1608 he published an elaborate and quite serious attempt

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 529, 530.

² He calls Plato a "tumid poet." The reproach lay in the word "tumid." If the word "poet" seem intended to convey something of disparagement, the explanation is that Bacon was desirous of keeping up an appearance of detachment from poetry and poets.

³ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 292-3.

to conjure science, philosophy, ethics, politics etc., out of what might be described as a chance medley of mythical tales, recorded, embellished, and partly invented by poets. Had we known nothing of Bacon's early pursuits and of the real bent of his genius, we should have been tempted to ascribe this ingenious and interesting freak—the *Sapientia Veterum*—to an impulse of scientific rather than poetic origin, especially as the chemical and other experiments of his closing years have received more than their due share of attention at the hands of his biographer Rawley and others. But that would be to invert the true order. With Bacon affection for literature, especially poetry, came long before affection for anything like science. Among the various phenomena which point in this direction, not the least interesting is a passage in the *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), the final version of the *Advancement* (1605):

Poesy is as it were a dream of learning: a thing sweet and varied and fain to be thought partly divine, a quality which dreams also sometimes affect. But now it is time for me to become fully awake, to lift myself up from the earth, and to wing my way through the liquid ether of philosophy and the sciences.¹

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding i, 539.

Assuredly this beautiful passage is no mere flourish connecting Book II with Book III of the work which contains it. It was a pathetic renunciation—the last possibly of a series of more or less ineffectual renunciations—of poetry, and an even more pathetic aspiration after something else—neither poetry altogether, nor science,¹ nor philosophy, which the author in his later years was wont as Rawley informs us to regard as “his darling philosophy.”² The former case reminds one of Prospero’s renunciations of his “staff” and his “dainty Ariel”; the

¹ What this something was it is not easy to say. There can be no doubt that literature was one of its constituents, perhaps indeed the chief, for at times Bacon seems to have regarded it as exactly synonymous with “letters.” In a private epistle (to Gondomar) written shortly after his fall (June, 1621) he announces his resolution henceforth to devote himself to letters—*litteras me dedam*. *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding xiv, 285.

² *Sylva Sylvarum*, 1639, Dedication of, by William Rawley. But what possible motive it may be asked, could Bacon have had for any renunciation pathetic or otherwise? Suppose him to have discovered that to be famous as poet was to be lightly regarded as “natural philosopher”; may he not have resolved on renouncing literary fame for another kind of fame he had not yet tasted, and could not expect to achieve except at the price of such renunciation? This is putting the matter on the lowest ground. For a higher motive consult Bacon himself *e.g.* “Ego certe Rex optime et in iis quae nunc edo et in iis quae in posterum meditor, dignitatam ingenii et nominis mei (si qua sit) saepias sciens et volens proficio dum commodis humanis inserviam” (*De Augmentis*, Book VII).

latter, of his devotion to his only daughter the adorable Miranda.

To the question, what was Francis Bacon? a definite answer may now be returned. His genius (*ingenium*) was not that of the lawyer, not that of the man of science, not that of the abstract thinker. It was allied to that of the orator—the orator glorified. “Poesy is rather a pleasure or play of the imagination than a work or duty thereof,” and its office “hath ever been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it; the world being in proportion inferior to the soul.”¹ Even such was the true function of him who so finely phrased his ideal. For Bacon, spite of his determination to conceal it was after all essentially a poet.²

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 382, 343.

² Poets as well as scientists discerned this clearly enough. The enthusiasm not to say idolatry of the poets—taking Chapman, Jonson, and Herbert (George) as typical—for Bacon, being quite as remarkable though Mr. Spedding may not have thought so, as the coldness of the men of science. It may be objected that Bacon's *Translation of certain Psalms into English verse* 1624, is inconsistent with this conclusion. To this objection several fairly satisfactory answers have been made. But the particular answer which occurs to me at this moment I do not remember to have met with before. James I seems to have been bent on immortalising his reign by a translation or paraphrase of the Psalm of David. Those who aspired to co-operate in the work would

be bound to consult his taste in the matter of style, to write as they imagined their king would have written. Drummond tried his hand at this business. So did Sir W. Alexander. So I would suggest did Bacon in these *Translations*. Be this as it may, extant seventeenth century testimonies to the existence of a most intimate relation between Bacon and the Muses, Apollo, Poetry, Helicon, Parnassus, etc. are embarrassingly numerous. Thomas Randolph in Latin verses published in 1640 but probably written some fourteen years earlier, says Phœbus was accessory to Bacon's death, because he was afraid lest Bacon should some day come to be crowned king of Poetry or the Muses. Further on the same writer declares that as Bacon "was himself a singer" he did not really need to be celebrated in song by others (*Manes Verulamiani* prefixed to Gilbert Wats' Translation of the *De Augmentis* 1640). George Herbert in the same *Manes Verulamiani* calls Bacon the colleague of Sol (Apollo). See also other Latin verses in the same collection. Thomas Campion with less caution (for he uses English in place of Latin) addresses Bacon, "Whether the thorny volume of the Law, or the Schools (natural philosophy etc.), or the sweet Muse allure thee." George Wither in his *Great Assizes at Parnassus* (1644) makes Bacon Chancellor of Parnassus and Sir Philip Sidney High Constable. Among more recent writers—who for the most part have decreed either with Dean Church that though Bacon had "the liveliest fancy and most active imagination," he had not "the sense of poetic fitness and melody," or with persons of less distinction, that Bacon had really no poetry in him at all—Shelley seems to have been one of the first to recognise that "Bacon was a poet; his language has a sweet and majestic rhythm" (*Prose Works* iii, 107). As for Bacon himself, there were once it would seem a number of private letters of his in which he confessed to being a poet. With one very significant and three or four less important exceptions, all these letters (which may have been in existence when Aubrey jotted down his note about Bacon's being "a good poet . . . as appears by his letters") have disappeared. Of the less important exceptions, one to the Earl of Essex in 1594-5, and another to Lord Henry Howard in 1599-1600, may be dealt with here. In the latter Bacon says to Lord Howard, "an excellent penman"

according to Raleigh, "we have both tasted of the best waters in my account to knit *minds* together." What those waters were the earlier explains, for in it Bacon entreats Essex not to be over anxious on his (Bacon's) account, because "the waters of Parnassus" were "not like the waters of the Spaw that give stomach, but rather quench appetite and desires" (for place, wealth, and such like vulgarities understood). This letter it may be added, was written shortly after the motto to *Venus and Adonis* (1593) had told the public that Shakespeare recked not of vulgarities, so long as Apollo vouchsafed to minister to him goblets full of the water of Castaly.

CHAPTER III.

SOME OF BACON'S ELIZABETHAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE

SOME of us might have expected that the diligent explorations of Bacon's more recent admirers would have been rewarded by the discovery of early Baconian tracts or fragments of considerable value to natural science. But the most interesting result of all this industry is the revelation that much of Bacon's youthful energy was devoted to ends which had nothing to do with natural science. The legal society (Gray's) to which he belonged was noted for its dramatic entertainments, and Bacon himself appears at times to have affected the rôle of honorary leader or master of the Graian wits and Graian revels.

Materials for forming an exhaustive judgment of his *Temporis Partus Maximus* (1585 or thereabouts) are probably wanting. According to John Chamberlain, "Mr. Henry Cuffe who had been secretary to

Robert Earl of Essex, and executed for being concerned in his treasons, having long since perused this work (*Temporis Partus Maximus*), gave this censure, that a fool could not have written such a work, and a wise man would not.”¹ The title of the piece, *Time’s Greatest Birth*, is sublime, too sublime surely to have been given altogether in earnest. Perhaps indeed the thing itself was merely a youthful *jeu d’esprit*, in which all the great thinkers of the world from Aristotle downwards, but seemingly none of the poets however didactic, were flouted and derided in order to make sport for a gay and brilliant audience. Just such auditors perhaps as those meant to be tickled by Biron’s invectives in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*:

Study is like heaven’s glorious sun
That will not be deep-searched with saucy looks ;
Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others’ books, etc.

The *Partus* in its integrity is probably lost beyond recovery. But an adequate notion of its general character may perhaps be gathered from a certain “Caput secundum” inserted by Gruter in his *Francisci Baconi Scripta*. Of this “Caput

¹ *Letters etc. of Francis Bacon*, by THOMAS BIRCH, D.D., London 1763, p. 236.

secundum" it certainly might without injustice be said "that a fool could not have written it, and a wise man would not." Gruter calls it one of Bacon's "dashes at philosophy."¹

In the year 1578 Bacon collaborated with his friend Trott and other kindred spirits of Gray's, in preparing the romantic drama *Misfortunes of Arthur* already mentioned. According to the black letter print (1587) of the tragedy, Bacon's part should have been limited to the "dumb-shows" by which the action and meaning of the play were fancifully illustrated and enforced. But though this be all that is expressly credited to Bacon it does not follow that nothing more was due to him, his handiwork being I think discernible in other portions of the play.²

¹ *Francisci Baconi Scripta*, Amsterdam, 1653. The Latinity of the piece is curious, and one would particularly like to know to whom we are to refer the phrase *sed trivialis scurra, et singulu distortuens et lusui propinans*, p. 473.

² The play is given at length in Dodsley's *Old English Plays* by W. G. HAZLITT, vol. iv. J. P. Collier says "It forms a sort of connecting link between such pieces of unimpassioned formality as *Ferrex and Porrex*, and rule-rejecting historical plays, as Shakespeare found them and left them"; also that "it is a new feature" in the biography of Bacon, "tho' not perhaps very prominent nor important, that he was so nearly concerned in the preparation of a play at Court." *Ibid.* pp. 252-3.

Some four or five years later (1591-2) Bacon produced *A Conference of Pleasure*, one of those dramatic and courtly entertainments technically known as "Devices." Two out of the four speeches of this particular "Device" made their way into print at a comparatively early date, but the piece as a whole was probably secluded and ultimately suppressed by its author. Nor was it wholly recovered until the year 1867. The MS. which appears to be in a sixteenth century hand and bears unmistakeable signs of having been on fire, has been skilfully edited by Spedding (1870), and forms perhaps one of the most important of his Baconian volumes. The piece is adorned throughout with wit and fancy, and not a few of its passages possess the indefinable charm of poetry. Those who conceive Bacon as almost a stranger to love will be rather surprised by the speech headed "The Praise of Love," which happens to belong to the suppressed portion of the "Device." The contrast between this Elizabethan "Praise of Love" and the same author's latest (Jacobean) *Essay of Love* is very striking. In the former love is declared to be the "noblest affection" of the mind; in the latter we are informed that "the stage is more beholding to Love than the life of man."

It may be urged that the "Praise" was merely dramatic, whilst the essay was personal and self-revealing. This explanation is ready to hand and plausible withal. A better would surely be that each of the two utterances is a more or less genuine expression of Bacon's own feeling at different periods of life and under different conditions of mental "climate," to variations of which he appears to have been singularly responsive. It was almost inevitable that the mobile and romantic youth who breathed the poetic air of 1592 should quarrel about love with the shattered senior of 1625,¹ especially if the senior were anxious to escape identification with his former self. In point of style the *Conference of Pleasure* does at times remind one of the *Apologie for Poetrie* of 1595, never of Bacon's own *Essays* of 1597.² This is not surprising, for

¹ There was no *Essay of Love* in 1597, and the first love essay (1612) is much less severe than the last (1625).

² Mr. Spedding says: There is in the "style" of the *Conference* "a certain affectation and rhetorical cadence, traceable in Bacon's other compositions of this kind, and agreeable to the taste of the time; but so alien to his own individual taste and natural manner, that there is no single feature by which his style is more specially distinguished whenever he speaks in his own person, whether formally or familiarly, whether in the way of narrative, argument, or oration, than the total absence of it." What then one would like to know, was Bacon's "own

Bacon held that arguments and persuasions "ought to differ according to the auditors; *Orpheus in sylvis, inter delphinas Arion*. Which application, in perfection of idea, ought to extend so far, that if a man should speak of the same thing to several persons, he should speak to them all respectively and several ways."¹ Of this "volubility of application," as he calls it, he was himself a most striking example. By assiduous cultivation of great natural versatility he had succeeded in becoming a sort of literary Proteus² capable of adapting his style to many subjects and many audiences.

In the year 1594 Bacon helped in the preparation of another dramatic entertainment, *The Doings of*

manner"? Was it that of the smart and insolent "Caput secundum," or of the majestic and scornful *Redargutio Philosophorum*, or of the *Advancement*? Was it that of the earliest or of the latest *Essays*? Was it that of the letters to Queen Elizabeth or of the letters to King James?

¹ *Advancement*, 1605, Book II p. 68. Towards the close of his life he ventured to recommend that "precepts should be added as to the kinds of verse which best suit each matter or subject." *De Augmentis*, *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding vol. iv, 443. In the *Advancement* he refrained from saying anything about verse in this connexion.

² Mr. Spedding informs us that the character of Bacon's Elizabethan handwriting was large and florid, quite unlike that of the later MSS. which is small and neat and compact. Whether Bacon's mind underwent corresponding change is a question which has not been sufficiently discussed.

the Graians. This interesting contribution to the wit and fun of his Inn seems to have remained in MS. for nearly a century. The copy before me is a thin quarto volume entitled *Gesta Grayorum, or the History of the High and Mighty Prince Henry Prince of Purpoole, Archduke of Stapulia* [Staple's Inn], *and Bernardia* [Bernard's Inn], *Duke of High and Nether Holborn etc. etc., Together with a Masque as it was presented for the entertainment of Queen Elizabeth.* "Bacon's name," to quote Mr. Spedding, "does not appear . . . and his connexion with it, though sufficiently obvious, has never so far as I know been pointed out or suspected."¹ Why? Because of the existence, I submit, of a compact to ignore Bacon's intimacy with things dramatic. Be this as it may, Bacon's pen may surely be traced not only in the orations of the six principal speakers, but also in other portions of the volume.² The speech part of the performance came off early in January 1595. But the "Revels,"

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding vol. viii, p. 325.

² Mr. Spedding, though quite certain that Bacon was sole author of the speeches, says he looks "in vain for any further traces of Bacon's hand." (*Bacon's Works*, vol. viii, 342-3.) To my mind the whole quarto including the masque, and not excluding the delightful hymn to Neptune (ascribed to Thomas Campion), is strongly suggestive of Bacon.

as they were called, had then been running their course for several nights, and on one of these nights a disturbance which for anything I can see may have been pre-arranged, is reported to have interrupted the due order of the mirth, therefore as the anonymous author of these *Gesta* informs us, "A comedy of Errors (like to Plautus his *Menechmus*) was played by the players."¹ Mr. Spedding thinks—and the "sober brow" of a Halliwell-Phillipps approves the opinion—that this particular *Comedy of Errors* was none other than the Shakespearean play of that name. If so, the notable wit-about-town who had thrown off the *Temporis Partus Maximus*, the *Conference of Pleasure*, and the *Gesta Grayorum*, must one would think, have come into contact with that other notable wit who had thrown off *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Comedy of Errors*, assuming of course that two wits were concerned.

To Mr. Spedding is due yet another discovery like unto the last. In this case also the Device itself was comparatively well known long before Sped-

¹ It is significant that these "players" are described as "a company of base and common fellows." In the *Advancement of Learning* Bacon afterwards publicly asserted that acting as a profession was "infamous."

ding's time. But from the days of Queen Elizabeth to the days of Queen Victoria it seems to have gone about in the name of the Earl of Essex, no one suspecting the while that it was entirely the work of Bacon. One of its *dramatis personæ* is a poetical *Hermit* whose business it is to persuade the Earl of Essex to quit the feervish world of affairs and betake himself to books and literature. Here is a sample of the eloquence of this fascinating recluse :

Let thy master offer his service to the Muses. It is long since they received any into their court. They give alms continually at their gate, that many come to live upon; but few have they ever admitted into their palace. There shall he find secrets not dangerous to know, sides and parties not factious to hold, precepts and commandments not penal to disobey. The gardens of love wherein he now playeth himself are fresh to-day and fading to-morrow, as the sun comforts them, or is turned from them. But the gardens of the Muses keep the privilege of the golden age: they ever flourish and are in league with time. The monuments of wit survive the monuments of power: the verses of a poet endure without a syllable lost, while states and empires pass many periods. Let him not think he shall descend, for he is now upon a hill as a ship is mounted upon the ridge of a wave; but that hill of the Muses is above tempests, always clear and calm;

a hill of the goodliest discovery that man can have, being a prospect upon all the errors and wanderings of the present and former times. Yea (as?), in (on?) some cliff it leadeth the eye beyond the horizon of time, and giveth no obscure divinations of times to come. So that if he will indeed lead *vitam vitam*, a life that unites safety and dignity, pleasure and merit; if he will win admiration without envy; if he will be in the feast and not in the throng, in the light and not in the heat; let him embrace the life of study and contemplation. And if he will accept of no other reason, yet because the gift of the Muses will enworthy him in his love, and where he now looks on his mistress's outside with the eyes of sense, which are dazzled and amazed, he shall then behold her high perfections and heavenly mind with the eyes of judgment, which grow stronger by more nearly and more directly viewing such an object.”¹

It may be urged that the true object of this eloquent appeal was not poetry but natural philosophy, and the objection derives colour from a subsequent passage in which the Hermit is playfully reminded that “many which take themselves to be inward counsellors with Nature have proved but idle believers.” But the colour is deceptive, a mere glance at the appeal itself being sufficient to show that the real treasure of the pleader's heart was not

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding viii, 379.

natural philosophy but poetry.¹ Moreover the next speaker begins his oration by ridiculing the Hermit's preference of books to arms, and then proceeds to express his conviction that the Earl of Essex would far "rather be a falcon, a bird of prey, than a singing bird in a cage"—a soldier that is, rather than a poet.

The Device last mentioned seems to have been the middle one of a trilogy. A fanciful contention between Love and Self-love for the person or favour of the Queen, appears to have been the theme of the first member of the trio. A similar contention between the same parties for the person or favour of Essex, is clearly the theme of Device No. 2, containing the speech just quoted. The last of the three was doubtless intended to suggest a permanent reconciliation between the Queen and her favourite. In it Love, whose blindness is supposed to have been the only cause of his defeat by Self-love in Device No. 1, is cured of his blindness, and so becomes worthy of his mistress the Queen. Immediately

¹ The poet was and maybe is apt to regard the world as his province. In pre-scientific days he must often have fancied himself a natural philosopher in virtue of his interest in all the shows of existence.

afterwards Self-love who had been worsted by Love in Device No. 2, is easily persuaded that his interests are really identical with those of his rival.¹ The three Devices then are integral parts of a single scheme. Nor is there any peculiarity of style or thought by which it is possible to distinguish one of them from the other or others. And as, thanks mainly to Mr. Spedding,² it is practically certain that not Essex but Bacon was the true author of one of the three, there can be little doubt that the other two members of the trilogy were his likewise.

Another place in the list of Bacon's contributions to dramatic literature must also be found for a tragical history of Richard II. We have already referred to the half-burnt manuscript which so recently as 1867 put us in possession of the full text of the *Conference of Pleasure* (1591-2). The charred and bescribbled outer sheet of this docu-

¹ Sonnet 61 justifies self-love on the ground that self is not self, but the loved one.

² Mr. Spedding failed perhaps to grasp the essential unity of the three pieces. Otherwise he surely would have denied the right of Essex and asserted the title of Bacon to the whole trilogy. Whether the Queen was ever informed of Bacon's agency is doubtful. But that Bacon was anxious to conceal the fact of his authorship from the world in general is highly probable.

ment bears among other curiosities,¹ the titles of certain literary ventures of the sixteenth century. Most of these titles have been satisfactorily identified as those of known productions of Bacon. Of some of them, notably one styled *Rychard the Second* the authorship is less certain, and for information on this point we must consult Bacon's *Apologie in Certaine Imputations Concerning the Late Earle of Essex* (1604), a small pamphlet of 74 pages. From it we gather (pp. 35-6) that a "booke" dedicated to Essex, and "being a storie of the first yeare of King Henry the Fourth," was related to something "which . . . grew from" the apologist himself. One of Bacon's *Apophthegms* hurriedly dictated in 1624, enables us to substitute the definite phrase "Deposing of King Richard the Second" for the ambiguous "first yeare of King Henry the Fourth."

¹ Among these curiosities are "honorificabilitudine" (compare *Love's Labour's Lost*), "Revealing day through everie cranie peepes" (compare *Rape of Lucrece* i, 1084), and the names "Mr. Francis Bacon" and "William Shakespeare," each many times repeated. Note that the same pair of names appear to have been associated in the mind of Edmund Howes, as well as that of him who used this outer sheet of the *Conference of Pleasure* for his scribbling pad. For Edmund Howes' "orderly" catalogue of "excellent" Elizabethan poets comprises "Sir Francis Bacon" and "Master Willi Shakespeare" (Howes' continuation of *Stowe's Chronicle*, 1614, p. 811).

The mysterious something then which "grew from" Bacon, and turns out to have been concerned with the fall of Richard II rather than the rise of Henry IV, "went after about" (the *Apologie* gives us to understand) "in other men's names." The Apologist goes on to say that he was more than once cross-examined by the Queen herself as to the true authorship of the offending "booke"—an examination be it observed, which would almost necessarily involve the question, who was the true author of the pseudonymous something related to the "booke"? And that when the parts of the various Crown lawyers came to be distributed, "it was allotted to me, that I should set forth some undutiful carriage of my Lord (Essex) in giving occasion and countenance . . . to the booke before mentioned of King Henry the Fourth"; whereupon Bacon expostulated, first, "that it was an old matter,"¹ and second, that the allotment would expose him to the charge of giving "in evidence his owne tales."² That these "tales" were historical is to be inferred from the context, but that any one

¹ The book by Dr. Hayward was a new matter. The "old matter" must therefore have been Bacon's.

² *Apologie*, 1604, p. 49.

of them was dramatic would not be suspected from any expression let fall by their author. It happens however that John Camden an old friend of Bacon's, supplies us with another version of the affair, according to which Sir G. Merick was charged with having "procured an old out-worn play of the tragical deposing of King Richard the Second to be acted upon the public stage before the conspirators, which the lawyers interpreted to be done by him as intending to signify to them that they should now behold that acted upon the stage which was the next day to be acted by themselves in deposing the Queen. And the like censure was given upon a book of the same argument set forth a little before by one Hayward a learned man, and dedicated to the Earl of Essex. . . . A dear book to the author, who was punished by a tedious imprisonment for his unseasonable publishing of it, and for these words in his preface to the Earl: 'Great art thou in hope, greater in expectation of future time.'"¹ According to Camden then, the suspected documents consisted of an old play by an *unnamed* author of the "deposing of Richard the Second," and "a book

¹ The quotation is from the third edition of the *History of Elizabeth Queen of England*, London, 1675, p. 627.

by one Hayward, a learned man, of the same argument." According to Bacon, the suspected documents consisted of a *pseudonymous* something of which he himself was the (true) author, and a "booke" by "Doctour Hayward,"¹ of the "Deposing of Richard the Second." That the "book" mentioned by Camden was identical with the "booke" mentioned by Bacon is practically certain; and this being so, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Bacon's "old matter," "tale," or what not, must have been identical with the "old out-worn play of . . . Richard the Second" mentioned by Camden.²

This completes the account of Bacon's earlier and

¹ The *Apologie*, 1604, does not mention Hayward, though it says the author of the "booke" was a "doctor." The *Apophtegm* (1624) mentions "Doctour Hayward" as the supposed author.

² Is this old play of Bacon's still in existence? What was the date of its composition? Under what name did it "go about"? Towards the solution of these questions I may suggest: (i) Camden's description "old out-worn" would be satisfied with a date of 1590 or thereabouts: (ii) Since the phrase "went *after* about" (*supra* p. 66) seems to imply an interval between date of composition and date of pseudonymity, it is not unlikely that the tale or play at first appeared without any name at all: (iii) It may be assumed that the play itself was entirely innocent of treason, actual or constructive. Otherwise its author would probably have been arraigned along with Essex, instead of being permitted to clear himself of treasonable complicity by acting as one of the counsel for the Crown.

more easily recognisable contributions to dramatic literature. I say "more easily recognisable" because Bacon by his own showing would seem to have been the author of other "tales"—a series perhaps of historical tales concerning the Wars of the Roses—which may have been permitted and even encouraged to "go about in other men's names." In this connexion, the half-burnt outer sheet of the *Conference of Pleasure* is not without relevance, for on it the heading or title *Rychard the Second* is immediately followed by another, that other being *Rychard the Third*.

The non-dramatic division of our subject will not occupy us long. Only two of its items indeed seem to call for particular notice at present, viz. the ten brief *Essays* which appeared in Bacon's own name in 1597, and one Sonnet. Of the essays, it may not unfairly be said that they were both crude and tentative. Why traders in books should have been so eager to steal¹ them seems almost incomprehensible, except on the assumption that their author had already become famous in the world of letters. Of

¹ The "epistle dedicatory" informs his brother that "these fragments of my conceits" were going to print "whether he would or not," and so he published them himself "to prevent stealing."

the Sonnet, all we know for certain is that it was written shortly before the Essex catastrophe.¹ Why it has not been preserved—if indeed it have perished—we can but conjecture. Though it appears to have been the only thing of its kind which Bacon expressly acknowledged, it can scarcely have been the only Elizabethan poem of which he was the (true) author; because we know from one of his private letters that he considered himself a member of a particular group or brotherhood of Elizabethan poets.

To conclude. Among the facts which I take to be established by the evidence, it may be well to draw special attention to these: (a) some at least of Bacon's early literary work or "play" was dramatic; (b) he permitted dramatic work of his, of extreme grace and charm, to be ascribed to others.

¹ *Apologie*, p. 32.

CHAPTER IV.

A CARICATURE OF SOME NOTABLE ELIZABETHAN POET

THIS chapter will be devoted to the consideration of a singular figure in one of the humorous comedies of Ben Jonson. *Poetaster*, the fourth and perhaps the most interesting of these comedies, appears to have been written as well as acted in or about the year 1601. The canvas of this curious picture of manners displays a number of personages, of whom the supposed poetaster himself is by no means the most conspicuous. The chief person indeed is a certain poet or "wit" called Ovid the Younger whom Jonson, mainly I suppose on professional grounds, seems to have abhorred.¹

¹ The predominance in the play of this Ovid Junior, the "poet-ape" allusion in the prologue, the Poet-ape epigram (No. 61) etc., dispose me to think that the title originally intended for this play may have been Poet-ape rather than *Poetaster*. Jonson's idea would seem to have been that professional poets and they only, were true poets. Other persons might write poetry, but if they affected superiority to those who wrote for gain, they were but poet-apes—criminal apes—if they presumed, no matter whether with or without consent, to borrow situations or plots from their professional brethren.

At the rising of the curtain, we discover Ovid sitting in his study with Luscus, a faithful servant of the family, gesticulating in the background. Ovid is engaged in repeating to himself a couple of verses, which we are to suppose he has written some hours previously, when Luscus interrupts him :

Lusc. Young master, master Ovid, do you heare? Gods a mee! Away with your *songs* and *sonnets*, and on with your gowne and cappe quickly : here, here, your father will be a man of this roome presently. Come, nay, nay, nay, nay, be briefe. These verses too, a poyson on them, I cannot abide 'hem, they make mee readie to cast, by the banks of *helicon*. Nay, looke what a rascally untoward thing this *poetrie* is ; I could tear 'hem now.

Ovid. Give me, how neere's my father?

Lusc. Hart a' man : get a law-book in your hand, I will not answere you else. Why so : now there's some formalitie in you. By Jove, and three or foure of the gods more, I am right of mine olde masters humour for that ; this villanous *poetrie* will undoe you, by the welkin.

* * * * *

Gods a mee ! What'll you doe? Why, young master, you are not *castalian* mad, lunatike, frantike, desperate? ha?

Ovid. What ailest thou, Luscus?

Lusc. God be with you, sir. I'le leave you to your *poeticall* fancies and *furies*. I'le not be guiltie, I.

Ovid. Be not, good ignorance. I'm glad th'art gone ; for thus alone, our eare shall better judge the hastie errors of our morning *muse*.

'Envie, why twitst thou me, my time's spent ill?¹
And call'st my verse, fruits of an idle quill?

* * * * *

Or that I studie not the tedious lawes;
And prostitute my voyce in everie cause?
Thy scope is mortall; mine eternall fame;
Which through the world shall ever chaunt my name.

* * * * *

Kneele hindes to trash: me let bright *Phæbus* swell,
With cups full flowing from the *Muses'* well.

* * * * *

Then, when this bodie fals in funerall fire,
My name shall live, and my best part aspire.'

At this juncture, Ovid Senior bursts into the room with:

Your name shall live indeed, sir; you say true: but how infamously, how scorn'd and contemn'd in the eyes and eares of the best and gravest Romanes, that you thinke not on: you never so much as dreame of that. Are these the fruits of all my travaile and expenses? Is this the scope and aime of thy studies? are these the hopefull courses wherewith I have so long flattered my expectation from thee? verses? *poetrie*? Ovid, whom I thought to see the pleader, become Ovid the play-maker.²

¹ OVID, Lib. i., Amo., Ele. 15.

² There is a reminiscence I think, of this contrast between "pleader" and "play-maker" in the *Troilus and Cressida* preface, which ironically suggests that it would have been well for a man of the author's position if the "vain names" of "plays" had been changed to "pleas."

Ovid Jun. No, sir.

Ovid Sen. Yes, sir. I hear of a tragoedie of yours comming forth for the common players there, called Medea. By my household-gods, if I come to the acting of it, I'le adde one tragik part more than is yet expected to it: beleieve me when I promise it. What? Shall I have my sonne a stager now? an enghle for players? a gull? a rooke? a shot clogge? to make suppers, and be laught at? Publius, I will set thee on the funerall pile, first.

Ovid Jun. Sir, I beseech you to have patience.

Captain Tucca and Lupus two of the elder Ovid's parasites, here follow suit with invectives against players, as corrupters of the young gentry, as putting magistrates upon the stage for the purpose of making them ridiculous to the plebeians, and as no better than rogues and vagabonds in the eye of the law. "They forget they are in the *statute*, the rascals, they are *blazond* there, there they are trickt, they and their pedigrees; they neede no other *heralds* I wisse." After this interruption Ovid the Elder continues:

Mee thinkes, if nothing else, yet this alone, the very reading of the publike *edicts* should fright thee from commerce with them, and give thee distaste enough of their actions. But this betrayes what a student you are: this argues your proficiencie in the *law*.

Ovid Jun. They wrong mee, sir, and doe abuse you more,
That blow your eares with these untrue reports.
I am not knowne unto the open stage
Nor doe I traffique in their *theaters*.

Indeed, I doe acknowledge, at request
Of some neere friends, and honorable Romanes,
I have begunne a *poeme* of that nature.

Ovid Sen. You have, sir, a *poeme*? and where is't? that's the *law* you studie.

Ovid Jun. Cornelius Gallus borrowed it to reade.

Ovid Sen. Cornelius Gallus? there's another gallant, too, hath drunke of the same poison: and Tibullus, and Propertius. But these are gentlemen of meanes and renew now. Thou art a yonger brother, and hast nothing, but thy bare exhibition: which I protest shall bee bare indeed, if thou forsake not these unprofitable by-courses,¹ and that timely too. Name me a profest *poet*, that his *poetrie* did ever afford him so much as a competencie.

Here the speaker proceeds to disparage Homer, whose fame could neither "feed him," nor "give him place in the commonwealth," nor "worship," nor "attendants," all which, says Lupus, "the *law* will doe, yonge sir, if you'le follow it." Ovid the younger meekly replies:

I will be anything, or studie anything:
I'le prove the unfashion'd body of the *law*
Pure elegance, and make her ruggedst straines
Runne smoothly, as Propertius *elegies*.

Ovid Sen. Propertius *elegies*? . . . Why, he cannot speake, he cannot thinke out of *poetrie*, he is bewicht with it.

¹ A reminiscence of part of this word "by-course" is to be found in Jonson's *Discovery* that the Muse of poetry had "advanced in the way of their own professions," those only who had saluted her on the "*by*."

Here Lupus, who had previously alluded to himself as one of the “magistrates” aggrieved by the license of the players, takes up the parable :

Indeed, young Publius, he that will now hit the marke must shoot thorough the *law*, we have no other *planet* raignes, and in that spheare, you may sit, and sing with the angels. Why, the *law* makes a man happy, without respecting any other merit : a simple scholer, or none at all may be a lawyer.

Tucca. He tells thee true . . . my little *grammaticaster* he do’s : It shall never put thee to thy *mathematiques*, *metaphysiques*, *philosophie*, and I know not what suppos’d sufficiencies ; if thou canst but have patience to plod inough, talke, and make noise inough, be impudent inough, and ’tis inough.

Lupus. Three bookes will furnish you.

Tucca. And the lesse arte the better : Besides when it shall be in the power of thy chev’rill conscience, to doe right, or wrong, at thy pleasure, my pretty Alcibiades.

Lupus. I, and to have better men than himself by many thousand degrees, to observe him, and stand bare.

Tucca. True, and he to carry himselfe proud, and stately, and have the law on his side for’t, old boy.

Ovid Sen. Well, the day growes old, gentlemen, and I must leave you. Publius, if thou wilt hold my favour, abandon these idle fruitlesse studies that so bewitch thee. Send Janus home his back-face againe, and looke only forward to the *law*. Intend that. I will allow thee, what shall sute thee in the ranke of gentlemen, and maintaine thy societie with the best : and under these conditions, I leave thee. My blessings light upon thee, if thou respect them : if not, mine eyes may drop for thee, but thine owne heart will ake, for it selfe ; and so farewell.

His tormentors having at length left him to himself, the wretched Ovid tries to unburden his heart in a passionate soliloquy, which begins with an invocation to the gods to give him "stomacke to digest this *law*," and goes on :

O sacred *poesie*, thou spirit of artes,¹
 The soule of science, and the queene of souls,
 What prophane violence, almost sacrilege,
 Hath here beene offered thy divinities !
 That thine owne guiltlesse povertie should arme
 Prodigious ignorance to wound thee thus !
 From thence, is all their force of argument
 Drawne forth against thee ; or from the abuse
 Of thy great powers in adultrate braines :
 When, would men learne but to distinguish spirits,
 And set true difference twixt those jaded wits
 That runne a broken pase for common hire,
 And the high raptures of a happy *Muse*,
 Borne on the wings of her immortall thought,
 That kickes at earth with a disdaineful heele,
 And beats at heaven gates with her bright hooves ;
 They would not then with such distorted faces,
 And desp'rate censures stab at *poesie*.
 They would admire bright knowledge, and their minds
 Should ne'er descend on so unworthy objects,
 As gold, or titles : they would dread farre more,
 To be thought ignorant, then be knowne poore.

¹ It is worthy of note that in the revised (after 1615) edition of *Poetaster* this line runs, "O Sacred Poesie, thou spirit of *Romane* artes." The insertion of the word "*Romane*" suggests a desire on Jonson's part to dissociate the caricature from the Elizabethan poet for whom it had originally been contrived.

For our immediate purpose the more significant features of this soliloquy are: (a) its confusion of poetry with knowledge or science, and (b) its curious assumption that if men would only learn to distinguish between the professional poet, the "jaded" wit that runs a "broken pase for common hire," and the "high raptures" of the non-professional poet who flies and sings to please himself, then all would be well, not merely with poetry and poets, but also with science.

The opening of the next scene shows that the parental exhortations had made a certain impression upon the singularly plastic mind of Ovid the Younger. But the resolutions of a being so mutable were sure to be fleeting. A poetical friend arrives, salutes with a "Good morrow, Lawyer," and insists on knowing what it is that Ovid is writing:

How now Ovid! Law cases in verse?

Ovid. In troth, I know not: they runne from my pen unwittingly, if they be verse.¹

¹ Bacon's biographer Rawley may have had something of this sort in his mind when he said of Bacon's manner of writing: "If his style were polite" (antithesis to rude) "it was because he could do no otherwise"; and again, "If he had occasion to repeat another man's words after him, he had an use and faculty to dress them in better vestments . . . as if it had been natural to him to use good forms, as Ovid spake of his faculty of versifying, *Et quod tentabam scribere versus erat.*" (*Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding vol. i, pp. 11 and 13.)

The result of the interview is that Ovid resolves (re-resolves perhaps) to abandon the Law :

Hence *Law*, and welcome, *Muses* : though not rich,
Yet are you pleasing : let 's be reconcilde,
And now made one. Hencefoorth, I promise faith,
And all my serious houres to spend with you.¹

Neglecting acts II and III altogether, we may pass on to the fifth scene of act IV, in which Ovid is represented as a half-intoxicated voluptuary, with a partiality for the doctrine that "Jove laughs at lovers' perjuries." The Princess Julia, to whom Ovid but a short time before had vowed everlasting adoration, does not approve of his "goings on," and threatens to punish his unfaithfulness by forming a cabal to throw him "downe into earth, and make a poore poet" of him—degrade him in other words, to the level of one of those "jaded wits" whom his soul abhorred.

Of the fifth and last act of the play, the primary motive was to exalt the function and state of the professional poet,² a subordinate motive being to

¹ *Ben Jonson's Dramatic Workes*, 1616. *Poetaster*, act I, scene 3.

² The play, it may be well to repeat, is evidence of a feud between the amateur poet and his following on the one side, and the professional poet and his allies on the other, the former being probably the aggressors. The author of the *Defence of Poetrie* 1595 (usually ascribed to Sir P.

cover "play-dressers, plagiaries," and "such like buffon¹ barking wits," with what no doubt passed for humorous derision.

Poetaster was first published in 1602 without its "apologeticall Dialogue." The latter, though probably acted along with the play itself in the year 1601 or thereabouts, was not at first permitted to be published, because no doubt its reflections were too personal. In 1616 however, when *Poetaster* was republished, the suppressed *pièce justificative* appeared in its proper place at the end of the play. It deals with the charge of having calumniated "the Law and

Sidney), complains that "poet-apes," "base men with servile wits . . . who think it enough, if they can be rewarded of the printer," are "the cause why it (poetry) is not esteemed in England." Jonson of course was the protagonist of the other side. He retorts the offensive name poet-ape upon his opponents, and generally repays arrogance with arrogance of a coarser quality. In this connexion I would suggest that Stephens' Character of "A base Mercenary Poet" may have been specially aimed at Ben Jonson: "Gold and Silver onely doe not make him a hyerling: but envy, malice, and the meanes to be made famous; among which means, the cheife be libels, *scandala magnatum*, petty treasons, and imprisonments . . . His Apologies discover his shifting cousenage: for hee attributes the vices of his quill to the Ages infirmity, which endures nothing but amorous delightes, close bawdry, or mirthfull jests." Contrast this Character with that of "A Worthy Poet" by the same writer. *Essays and Characters* 1615, pp. 288-295 and 187-192.

¹ A reminiscence of Carlo Buffone in *Every Man out of his Humour*.

the Lawyers" etc. "by their particular names." "It is not so," says Jonson indignantly, but not quite ingenuously :

I us'd no name. My Books have still beene taught
To spare the persons, and to speake the vices.
These are meere slanders, and enforc'd by such
As have no safer wayes to men's disgraces,
But their owne lyes

* * * * *

First, of the Law. Indeed, I brought in Ovid,
Chid by his angry father, for neglecting
The study of their lawes, for poetry :
And I am warranted by his owne words.

* * * * *

*Non me verbosas leges ediscere, non me
Ingrato voces prostituisse foro.*

So much for the caricature itself. But in order to justify the heading of this chapter, it is necessary to say something in the way of identification. Proud of his familiarity with classical learning, Jonson was as unlikely as any cultivated man of his time to make a butt of the Ovid who died at Tomi in the year 17 A.D. Moreover Jonson is known to have made it his business to go about collecting "humours" (contemporary humours of course) for the purpose of satire. His other comedies whether

previous or subsequent to *Poetaster*, were obviously distilled from the affectations, whims, distempers, not of antiquity but of the age to which he himself belonged. Finally though there are of course many points of resemblance between the Augustan Ovid and the Jonsonian abstraction called Ovid, there are some points too obvious to need particular mention, which refute if they do not preclude, the supposition that the true Ovid might possibly have been the object of Jonson's derision. In my opinion therefore, Jonson's Ovid Junior was invented or designed to excite laughter at the expense of a distinguished contemporary "wit," who though less of a scholar in the Academic sense, was probably more of a poet by many degrees than Jonson himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUBJECT OF THE FOREGOING CARICATURE

WHAT is the name of the contemporary "wit" whom Jonson kept ever in view as he worked at his Ovid the Younger? The indications given in the caricature are many and various, and for the most part by no means wanting in precision. Some refer to the subject himself, others to his literary output, others again to his environment, and so on.

As to environment, it obviously included gay accomplished and poetry-loving companions, as well as a father choleric worldly wise of high official rank and furious at the mere thought of his son's entanglement with the "open" or "public" stage. As to output, that was in part at least dramatic poetry. As to the man himself, though his versatility must have been extraordinary, he clearly had a vocation, and that vocation was poetry.

In these and many other respects the caricature points in the direction of Francis Bacon. Not the oracular Bacon portrayed by his chaplain William Rawley, not the “Father of Experimental Philosophy” as he is sometimes called, but the comparatively unknown “Mr. Francis Bacon” of the age of Elizabeth, the gay and brilliant and mercurial author of the *Gesta Graiorum*, *Conference of Pleasure* etc.

To begin with environment. In the matter of worldly goods, Bacon’s predicament was just that of Ovid the Younger, who as Ovid the Elder reminds him, was an impecunious “yonger brother.”¹ It may be urged that Bacon had been fatherless since 1579. But Bacon’s maternal uncle—who certainly was no Mæcenas to poetry,² and whose estimate of play-making as a profession differed no doubt but slightly from that of Ovid the Elder³

¹ Nevertheless Bacon’s social and political influence must always—even in 1601 when at their lowest ebb—have been considerable. And in this connexion, the suppression by authority of Jonson’s “Apologeticall Dialogue” is not without significance.

² Assuming the story about Edmund Spenser’s *honorarium* to be substantially true.

³ I am not unaware that Lord Burleigh was in his grave at the time *Poetaster* was placed on the stage. Nor do I contend that he was exactly reproduced in Ovid the Elder.

—seems to have taken the place of father to the youthful Francis. Again, the fashionable legal Inn to which Bacon belonged must have included among its members a good many analogues to the poetry-loving friends of the Jonsonian Ovid. Once more, though a lawyer by profession, Ovid the Younger had no “stomach” for law, and gave expression to his dislike in the Roman poet’s distich: *Non me verbosas leges ediscere, non me ingrato voces prostituisset foro*. In like manner Bacon—during the sixteenth century at any rate—made no secret of his aversion to law. He also took the trouble to enter the very same distich in one (possibly more than one) of his commonplace books.¹

In the matter of natural endowment, Bacon though no doubt like Ovid the Younger greatly interested in philosophy—of the panoramic order—was after all essentially a poet. Apropos of Ovid’s habit of submitting his work to the test of the ear as a sort of Court of Final Appeal, it may be well to observe that one of the chief articles of Bacon’s theory of versification was that “In modern languages” men are “as free to make new measures

¹ *Bacon’s Works*, edition Spedding vii, p. 192.

of verses as of dances," because in all questions of that kind "the sense is better judge than the art."¹

Ovid is indignant at the contemptuous attitude of men of affairs towards poetry and poets, and the lines in which he apostrophises poetry as the "soul of science" etc., are his protest against disparagement of his favourite occupation. Turning to Bacon, it is to be noted that the first book of his *Advancement* is in fact if not in name, an apology for *belles lettres*, especially poetry, and seems to have been more particularly addressed to those pragmatistical personages who looked down upon literature as a trivial if not exactly a low pursuit.²

Again, though Bacon (like Plato) was in truth a poet, he was extremely careful to maintain his aloofness from the regular professors of the art in his day. In the year 1604 for example, he was

¹ *Advancement* Book II, under the head, not of poetry but of grammar. It is worthy of note in relation to this utterance of Bacon's, that George Herbert hailed him as a "Literary Brutus" who had shaken off the tyranny of dictators. See Latin verses prefixed to Gilbert Wats' translation (1640) of the *De Augmentis Scientiarum*.

² It seems pretty clear that the first book of the *Advancement* must have been written some time before the second. But whether Book I was or was not actually written in 1601, Bacon's views on the question therein discussed were probably well known to Ben Jonson at least as early as that.

induced by untoward events to make a semi-public confession¹ that he had written a sonnet. Apprehensive lest his confession should increase the risk of his being taken for a professed poet, he tacks to it a direct disclaimer: "I had—though I professe not to be a poet—prepared a sonnet" etc.² As for Ovid the Younger, he plainly asserts his detachment from the professional poets of the day by calling them "jaded wits that run a broken pase for common hire" etc. His expressions are more offensive perhaps than any which Bacon can be proved to have uttered. But Ovid was a caricature, not a copy. Nor is it impossible that Bacon may on occasion have permitted himself to make use of expressions quite as contemptuous as those ascribed to Ovid. In any case, Jonson glorying in the profession of poet, and full of honest indignation against all who seemed³ to despise it, would see no harm in exaggerating what he was bent on rendering ridiculous.

Related to this dislike of the professional poet is a

¹ See his *Apologie in Certaine Imputations* etc., already quoted.

² *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding x, 149. (*Apologie*, p. 32.)

³ It is hardly necessary to explain that Bacon did not despise all professed poets, least of all those of Rome.

suggestion put into the mouth of Tucca, that Ovid affected a certain haughty reserve of manner. And it is worth noticing that a similar affectation was imputed to Bacon, his uncle having taken him to task on the subject¹ in 1586.

Another characteristic of Ovid the Younger is an extraordinary flexibility, which in a wholly favourable light might have passed for comprehensiveness. Allowing for caricature, this flexibility is not many removes from the extraordinary versatility for which Bacon was distinguished.² Observe too that the name (Ovid) which Jonson gave to his caricature supports my contention as to its original, Bacon's partiality for and obligations to the Roman Ovid being conspicuous even now.

So far no comment has been made upon Ovid's relation to the public stage. What most inflamed the fury of Ovid the Elder was not the discovery that his son was a poet, but the suspicion that he

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding viii, 59.

² Osborn in his *Advice to a Son*, 1673, speaks of the dramatic variety of Bacon's discourse. "So I have heard him (Bacon) entertain a country-lord in the proper terms relating to hawks and dogs, and at another time out-cant a London Chirurgeon" etc. Osborn had also got hold of the idea that Bacon wrote without effort; his "first and foulest copies required no great labour to render them competent for the nicest judgment."

was in danger of becoming known as a "play-maker." Unable to deny having written a particular play, the young casuist substitutes the comparatively innocent word "*poeme*" for the theatre-tainted word "tragedy," and assures his father that he was "not *known* unto the open stage"¹; the suggestion being I think, not that he *never wrote* for the "common players," but that his occasional work for them was either anonymous, or else permitted to go "about in other men's names."

Turning from the caricature to its supposed subject, not only was Bacon a poet at a time when much of the poetry of the day was dramatic, but his qualifications for dramatic work were of no common order. But some of his recognised Elizabethan work actually was dramatic. Moreover, curious as is Bacon's manner when treating of "poesie," his manner when dealing with dramatic poetry is more curious still. The *Advancement of Learning* although not published till the reign of her successor, belongs to the age of Elizabeth in conception, observation, reflection, and substance generally. In this work, after having mapped out the "globe" of human knowledge into three great

¹ Cf. pp. 73-4 *supra*.

continents of which poetry is one, he finds himself face to face with dramatic poetry. Compelled to give the thing a name, he rejects the almost inevitable word dramatic in favour of the distant word "*representative*." And what he permits himself to say about "representative" poetry in that the natural and proper place for saying it, seems intended to suggest what of course was absurdly untrue, viz., that he was all but a stranger to anything in the nature of a dramatic performance. The suggestion also is strangely out of keeping with passages of unexpected occurrence in other parts of the work. For instance, in handling what he calls the "Georgics of the mind," he describes poetry (conjointly with history) in terms which so admirably characterise the very best dramatic poetry of the age, that it is difficult to resist the conviction that he must have been thinking chiefly of the masterpieces of Shakespeare. In poetry, says he, "we may find painted forth with great life, how affections are kindled and incited; and how pacified and refrained; and how again contained from act and further degree; how they disclose themselves, how they work, how they vary, how they gather and fortify, how they are inwrapped one within

another, and how they do fight and encounter one with another . . . how to set affection against affection, and to master one by another; even as we use to hunt beast with beast," etc.¹ Another of these unexpected passages seems to imply that Bacon, writing at the close of the Elizabethan epoch, was so convinced of the paramount importance of dramatic poetry, as to have forgotten for the moment that there was any poetry at all except what had to do with the theatre.² In seeking to arrive at an explanation of these eccentricities of treatment, one should try not to forget that Bacon's receptivity was as extraordinary as his many-sided-

¹ *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding iii, 438.

² In this passage (*Ibid.* p. 346) Bacon has been claiming that "for the expressing of the affection, passions, corruptions, and customs, we are beholding to the poets more than to the philosophers," when he suddenly breaks off with an ironical—"But it is not good to stay too long in the theatre." A somewhat similar aposiopesis occurs in the fragmentary essay *Of Fame*, which Bacon himself apparently meant to withhold from publication: "Now if a man can tame this monster . . . it is something worth. But we are infected with the style of the poets." For a perfectly serious expression of the same kind, see the MATHEWS' *Collection of Letters*, 1660, p. 22. Bacon, who placed the greatest confidence in Mathews' literary judgment, is there seen asking the latter to "make some little note in writing" against any passage (in some manuscript of Bacon's) which might suggest that Bacon had "allowed his genius to run away with him" (*indulgere genio*).

ness; that the most impressionable period of his life coincided with the flowering time of English dramatic poetry; that during the whole of that period his usual place of abode lay within a mile or so of all the English theatres; that his favourite brother at one time rented a house close to the Bull Inn where, among many other plays, one called *The Jew*, "representing the greediness of worldly choosers and the bloody minds of userers," was acted about 1579¹; that his intimate friend and literary critic Sir T. Mathews was an admirer of Shakespeare's plays etc. How the eccentricities would then strike a wholly dispassionate critic, I cannot say. To me they intimate that Bacon like Ovid the Younger had good reason to fear being associated, not with Sidney, Raleigh, Davis, and the like, but with "common" or public "play-makers," such as C. Marlowe and R. Greene.

But we have not exhausted the immediately available evidence bearing upon this point. Sir Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian, an old and valued

¹ This quotation is from Gosson's *School of Abuse*. My authority for the statement about Anthony Bacon's house is the *Athenæ Cantabrigienses*, 1861, vol. ii. Messrs. Cooper there say that the situation chosen by her son "was greatly disliked by his mother, on account of its contiguity to the Bull, where plays were continually acted."

friend of Bacon and his family, was presented with an early copy of Bacon's *Cogitata et visa* 1607-8. The presentation drew from the recipient a letter in which, after congratulating Bacon on having at length made choice of a fit subject of study (natural science), Bodley proceeds: "which course would to God—to whisper as much into your ear—you had followed at the first, when you fell to the study of such a study as was not worthy such a student." In order to catch the exact meaning of this "whisper," one needs to be reminded that Bodley held law, the ostensible early study of Bacon, in high esteem,¹ also that he deliberately shut the door of his Library against everything or almost everything whether poetry or prose, which had the misfortune to be an English play, on the ground that such "baggage" was beneath the dignity of the "under-keeper" and shelves of the Bodleian.

Then there is the well-known letter of Sir Tobie Mathews. In this letter, Mathews addressing Lord St. Albans, says, "The most prodigious wit, that ever I knew, of my nation and of this side of the sea, is of your lordship's name, though he be known by

¹ Compare Lupus's "he that will now hit the mark must shoot through the *law*, we have no other planet reigns," etc., *supra*, p. 78.

another.”¹ Apropos of this piece of evidence, it should be understood that Sir Tobie’s views concerning English drama were probably about as different as possible from those of Sir Thomas Bodley; that the letter itself must have been written after 27th January 1621 at the earliest, and may have been written just after the First Folio of Shakespeare had come into the writer’s hands; and lastly that “wit” in those days meant poet more often than not.

The last witness whom I shall call is Bacon himself. There is no reason to believe that Bacon’s correspondence was very rigorously edited before being offered to the public. Nevertheless by what

¹ *Letters etc. of Francis Bacon*, by THOMAS BIRCH, 1763, p. 392. Since writing this chapter I have come upon two tentative interpretations, one that Sir Toby’s “prodigious wit” was some “pseudonymous Jesuit,” the other that he was Anthony Bacon. Until it shall have been shown independently of the letter that Mathews was acquainted with some prodigy of genius among “pseudonymous” Jesuits, the former suggestion may be regarded as ingenious rather than probable. The Anthony Bacon suggestion has even less to commend it. As to the date of the letter itself, the month appears to have been April. Mathews also seems to have been in England from 1622 to about April, 1623. Whether he wrote the letter here or in Spain, and what may have been the “great and noble token” for which it returns thanks, etc., are questions to which perhaps no certain answer can be given.

would appear to be an extraordinary oversight on the part of one of his editors,¹ Bacon's own hand has been permitted to bear witness against himself that he was not merely a poet, but a "concealed poet." Why "concealed"? Surely because he had effective reasons to fear being generally known as a poet.²

¹ *Resuscitatio*, by WILLIAM RAWLEY, 1657, part ii, p. 24.

² The body of the letter which contains this confession expresses the writer's solicitude lest there should have been any "nibbling" at his name in the Court of King James, and the more significant sentence runs thus: "So desiring you to be good to *concealed poets*, I continue" etc. The correspondent was John (afterwards Sir John) Davis, one of Bacon's poetical friends, then apparently on the point of starting from London to meet the Scotch Court on its progress southwards. Neither this letter nor the one from Sir Toby Mathews about the "prodigious wit" is to be found in Mathews' *Collection of Letters*, 1660. Mathews' relation to Bacon was of longer standing and far greater intimacy than that of Rawley; and Thomas Birch to whom we owe the "prodigious wit" letter knew Bacon only by tradition. We may fairly infer from Mathews' omission of the "prodigious wit" letter that he knew Bacon would have disapproved of its publication. He includes a letter (*Collection*, p. 109) in which he jestingly reminds Bacon of "that excellent author Sir J. Falstaff," but beyond that his *Collection* does not venture in the direction of dramatic poetry. That Birch should have been over communicative is not surprising. But that Rawley should have erred in that way is. The explanation may be that Rawley's acquaintance with Bacon began late, and that Bacon treated him rather as a servant than as a confidant. Or Rawley may be supposed to have convinced himself that Bacon's memory in 1657 was no longer in danger of being associated with such frivolities as poetry and the drama. Mr. Spedding, it should be added, says he "cannot explain the passage" in this letter to Davis.

Such are some of the considerations which induce me to think that the caricature in question was intended for "Master Francis Bacon," then a person of no great importance in the State, and probably somewhat out of favour at Court by reason of his conduct in relation to the Earl of Essex.¹

It may be contended that there were probably other persons besides Bacon whom the caricature would have fitted. The criticism is a fair one, and in a certain sense true. For not a little of the satire in other dramatic works of Ben Jonson's

¹ A couple of minor objections may be dealt with in a note. In one of the later scenes of *Poetaster*, Ovid is transformed into an impious lewd and bibulous satyr, and Bacon cannot be supposed to have disgraced himself in any such way. True. But would it not be absurd to insist on pushing the comparison, on the same terms, into these plainly burlesque situations? Still, it is by no means impossible that hints, sufficiently near the truth to be highly relished by those for whom they were intended, may yet be detected even here. Again, it may be urged that Bacon's health was altogether too infirm for anything resembling the rôle of Ovid the Younger. But is there any evidence that Bacon's health was always infirm? In 1597 he almost prays that he might have his brother Anthony's "infirmities translated upon himself," in order that the Queen might be better served by Anthony, and he (Francis) provided with a valid excuse for devoting himself to those "contemplations and studies for which he was fittest" (Dedication of the *Essays* of 1597 to his brother Anthony). That surely was not the language of a valetudinarian! I should like to add that the idea of this relation between Bacon and Ovid occurred to me as long ago as the beginning of 1884.

(including dedications as well as prologues) was, *pace* W. Gifford, almost certainly directed against Shakespeare; and what is more to the point, one of the scenes of *Poetaster* itself—that in which Ovid takes leave of Julia, who “appears above at her chamber window”¹—reads rather like a travesty of passages in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare too was profoundly influenced by the works of the Roman Ovid. Of this there can be no question.

“But it is not good to stay too long” upon Shakespeare. That way madness lies, and poor Miss Delia Bacon. By all means then let us cease to muse upon Shakespeare, and fix our attention wholly upon the other or front face of the caricature. So doing, some of us will be likely sooner or later to arrive at the conclusion, that the “concealed poet” whose proper name was Francis Bacon wrote for the “common players,” and when he wrote for them covered his personality under an *alias* in order to escape certain imputations, one of which may have been that he did “traffique in their theaters.”

¹ Act IV, scene 8.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCE'S MASQUE

THE year 1623 was an *annus mirabilis* for the literary world, and especially so for Shakespeare. About half of his plays had already eluded the vigilance of their "grand possessors,"¹ and found their way somehow or other into print. But many of them were still kept in obscurity by mysterious hands, a gallery of incomparable pictures from which the public was carefully excluded. In the course of the year 1622 however, the various publishers mostly piratical of the earlier quartos, had all been overawed or persuaded, the mysterious hands had relaxed their grasp, and arrangements had been made by the author's admiring friends for publication of the first collected edition of the famous *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. How long it may have taken to obtain the "grand possessors'" consent,

¹ Preface to first edition (1609) of *Troilus and Cressida*.

settle the canon and determine the order of the plays, etc., we have no means of knowing with precision. But we shall not greatly err if we assign the first idea of the undertaking to the close of the year (1621) which witnessed the fall of "England's High Chancellor," Francis Bacon. In any case the First Folio must have been in the press, if not in the hands of admirers (? subscribers), by about the middle of the year 1623. The principal agent in the business was almost certainly Ben Jonson, little as one would have expected it in the earlier years of the century. For in those years Jonson's feeling towards Shakespeare seems to have been one of chronic exasperation. Altogether friendly it can hardly have been even in 1618, if the Drummond *Conversations* give all that Jonson cared to say about Shakespeare.¹ A hint of past hostility may be discerned in the opening lines of the famous Ode, which exhibit Jonson in the attitude of a suppliant protesting that he had no intention of drawing "envy, Shakespeare, on thy name." But in 1623 the feud itself was dead and buried, and any unkindliness which may have lingered till 1618 or

¹ Jonson set out from London for Scotland and Hawthornden in the summer of 1618. See Cunningham's *Ben Jonson*, vol. ix, p. 364.

thereabouts, had given place to something not far short of "idolatry." The exact date at which the reconciliation was completed is not known. Probably about 1620.

It is to be noted that another relation, that of Jonson to Bacon, seems to have passed through all the intermediate stages between enmity and adoration in about the same score of years. Of the connection between Bacon and Ovid the Younger (in *Poetaster*) enough has been said in the last chapter. There is little doubt also that *Every Man in his Humour*, an earlier comedy than *Poetaster*, has a thinly-veiled gibe at Bacon as "Rashero Baccono,"¹ in allusion probably to the *Partus Temporis Maximus* in one form or another. In most of his early dramatic work indeed, notably *Every Man out of his Humour*, Jonson seems to have contrived opportunities of irritating Bacon. Evidence that active hostilities had ceased may perhaps be found in the anecdote reported by Drummond, that Bacon had said to Jonson before the latter set out

¹ "Rashero Baccono" is toned down to "rasher-bacon" in the 1616 edition of the play. When the first edition appeared Bacon's power and influence were probably at zero. When the 1616 edition came out Bacon was a Privy Councillor and almost Lord Keeper.

in his walk from London to Edinburgh, that he (Bacon) "loved not to see poetry go on other than poetical feet." But of perfect reconciliation there is so far as I know, no evidence of earlier date than the Ode to Bacon on his sixtieth birthday, January 22nd 1621. In that Ode, Jonson after alluding to some "mystery" of which Bacon's "genius" was the author, suddenly exclaims :

Pardon, I read it in thy face the day
For whose returns, and many, all these pray.¹

To return to the subject of Jonson's literary work in or immediately before the year 1623. First in importance comes the Ode to Shakespeare. The rest of the preliminary matter of the First Folio, including the dedication to Earls Pembroke and Montgomery, and the address "To the great Variety of Readers," were also due, I am persuaded, mainly or wholly to him. Nor is this all. Though Jonson may well have declined to be responsible for the text in its entirety, the under-editors of the Folio

¹ The Ode to Shakespeare opens with an apology. This to Bacon, with a prayer for pardon. As to the cause of reconciliation, it is not impossible that Jonson may have owed the laureateship to Bacon's influence.

were probably expected to accept all his emendations,¹ and look to him for direction generally. This conception of Jonson's relation to the volume leaves little room for Messrs. Heminge and Condell. No doubt they lent their names to the enterprise. But that they took any active part in the work is very unlikely.

In the address "To the great Variety of Readers" these worthies are made to say that all the dramatic issue of Shakespeare's brain, kept theretofore in enforced confinement, were then and for the first time "offered to view absolute in their numbers as he conceived them." A fiction so grossly inaccurate might well have been ignored but for the fact that it happens to play an essential part in the Masque we are about to consider. Another noteworthy connection between this Masque and the First Folio

¹ Compare *Julius Cæsar*, act III, scene 1, lines 47-8, with Jonson's *Discoveries* (1641) p. 98. One would like to know the true date and occasion of an "epigram" of Sir Edward Herbert's, printed in 1840:

"'Twas not enough Ben Jonson to be thought
Of English poets best, but to have brought
In greater state to their acquaintance, one
Made equal to himselfe and thee, that none
Might be thy second, while thy glory is
To be the Horace of our times, and his."

To whom does the last word "his" refer?

is that of date; for both Masque and First Folio made their appearance in the year 1623, the former preceding and in some sort preparing the way for the latter.¹

Early in 1623 then, the Court of Whitehall was on the point of enjoying the series of surprises which the Poet Laureate at the suggestion and largely no doubt at the expense of Prince Charles, had for weeks, perhaps months, been contriving for its delectation. One would give a good deal for a list of the audience. And a description of the parts or characters personated by the "young blouds" who were the principal performers, would be worth more to the history of English literature than tons of "estate records" and such like. Bacon may have had this Masque—the *Prince's Masque* as it was called—in his mind when he wrote his essay *Of Masques*. But Bacon keeps his own counsel. Jonson gives us the text together with a few of his working directions, and with these we must needs be content.

A Masque à la Jonson, it may be well to explain, was neither a fancy ball nor a mere spectacular

¹ Publication of the Folio was probably delayed (as already suggested) by unforeseen difficulties.

entertainment. Serving not unfrequently as a vehicle for royal or courtly compliments, it enlisted the aid of a chorus, owed much to scenic and musical effects, and never concluded without dancing—"measures, braules, corrantos, and galliards" etc. But that which informed the whole structure was an allegorically expressed idea. The "Masquers," as distinct from the "Antimasquers," were always of noble or at least of gentle blood; the audience, usually the Court, was extremely select; the place of representation was either Whitehall itself or some other great house. In a course of lectures on Elizabethan literature delivered several years ago by Dr. R. G. Moulton, the Jonsonian Masque was so admirably treated that I cannot do better than quote and adapt some of his observations.

He said in effect :

An examination of Ben Jonson's Masques will show that this variety of dramatic art has a distinct structure, though of course one highly elastic. The nucleus of a Masque is a body of dancers, the 'Masquers' representing some allegorical or mythological idea. Side by side with these is a body of singers, the 'Chorus,' also allegorical, who with their leaders have to bring out and carry on the allegorical idea with which the dancers are connected. The parts of the Masque are five, the Prologue, Anti-masque, Disclosure, Dances, Close.

The Prologue denotes all the action that precedes the Anti-masque or Disclosure, as the case may be.

The Anti-masque served as a kind of foil to the central or main spectacle of the Masque. In the *Prince's Masque*, the Anti-masque was a comical confusion of make-believe and reality.

The Disclosure of the Masquers and opening out of the allegorical idea was the great opportunity for scenic display. The Disclosure always took place in the extreme background, so as to give scope for 'some motions' before the coming down of the Masquers.

The Dances were generally four. In the *Prince's Masque*, however, there are only three, namely an entry, or first dance; a main dance; and the Revels. The Revels were apparently ordinary dances, as distinguished from the all-important allegorical dances, and were open to the audience or spectators.

The close or winding up of the allegorical idea generally involved a return of the Masquers to their first position. The *Prince's Masque* presents a curious example of this.

The other and more significant title of the *Prince's Masque* is *Time Vindicated*. Kronos we are to suppose, has been taxed with senility. Laudators of past time have taken upon them to say that nothing comparable to the literary masterpieces of Greece and Rome would ever again be achieved. Jonson resolves to take sides in this battle of books. From his previous record one would have expected

to find him on the side of the Ancients. But in *Time Vindicated* the arch-satirist of his contemporaries, the affectionate student of Greek and Roman models, seems to desert his classical friends in order to plead the cause and guarantee the immortality of the Moderns.

The Prologue (using Dr. Moulton's terminology) of *Time Vindicated* begins with the sounding of a trumpet, and the first working direction is :

Fame entreth, follow'd by the *Curious*, the *Ey'd*, the *Ear'd*,
and the *Nos'd*.

Fame's first action is to announce to the "worthy," as distinguished from the merely curious "who come to spie, and hearken, and smell out more than they understand," that she "came" on an errand from "*Saturne*" :

Eares. Saturne, what is he ?

Nose. Some Protestant I warrant you, a Time-server, as *Fame* her selfe is.

Fame. You are neere the right. Indeed, he is *Time* it selfe, and his name *Kronos*.

Nose. How ! *Saturne* ! *Chronos* ! and the Time it selfe ! You're found : inough. A notable old *Pagan* !

* * * * *

Eies. Yes. We need no interpreter. On! what of *Time*?

Fame. The *Time* hath sent me with my Trumpe to summon
All sorts of persons worthy to the view
Of some great spectacle he meanes to-night
T' exhibite, and with all solemnitie.

[*Eies*, *Eares*, and *Nose* continue their chatter.

Enter CHRONOMASTIX.

Chro. What? what? my friends, will not this roome receive?

Eies. That which the *Time* is presently to shew us.

Chro. The *Time*? Lo I the man, that hate the time
That is, that love it not; and (though in ryme,
I here doe speake it) with this whipp you see,
Doe lash the *Time*, and am myselfe lash-free.

Fame. Who's this?

Eares. 'Tis *Chronomastic*, the brave *Satyre*.

Nose. The gentleman-like *Satyre*, cares for nobody,
His fore-head tip't with bayes, doe you not know him?

Eies. Yes *Fame* must know him, all the Town admires him.

Chro. If you would see *Time* quake and shake, but name us.
It is for that we are both belov'd and famous.

Eies. We know, sir. But the *Time*'s now come about.

Eares. And promiseth all libertie.

Nose. Nay licence.

Eies. We shall doe what we list.

Eares. Talke what we list.

Nose. And censure whom we list, and how we list.

Chro. Then I will look on *Time*, and love the same,
And drop my whip: who's this? My Mistris! *Fame*!
The lady whom I honour and adore!
What lucke had I not to see her before!
Pardon me, Madam, more than most accurst,

That did not spie your Ladiship at first,
T' have giv'n the stoop, and to salute the skirts
Of her, to whom all Ladies else are flirts !
It is for you, I revell so in rime,
Deare Mistris, not for hope I have the *Time*
Will grow the better by it. To serve *Fame*
Is all my end, and get myselfe a name.

Fame. Away, I know thee not, wretched Impostor,
Creature of glory, Mountebanke of witte,
Self-loving Braggart, *Fame* doth sound no trumpet
To such vaine, empty fooles. 'Tis Infamy
Thou serv'st and follow'st, scorne of all the *Muses*.
Goe revell with thine ignorant admirers,
Let worthy names alone.

Chro. O, you the *Curious*,
Breath you to see a passage so injurious,
Done with despight, and carried with such tumor
'Gainst me, that am so much the friend of rumor :
(I would say *Fame*?) whose *Muse* hath rid in rapture
On a soft ambling verse to every capture.
From the strong guard, to the weake childe that reades me,
And wonder both of him that loves or dreads me !
Who with the lash of my imortall pen
Have scourg'd all sorts of vices, and of men !
Am I rewarded, thus? Have I, I say,
From *Envies* selfe torne praise and bayes away,
With which my glorious front, and word at large,
Triumphs in print at my admirers' charge.

Eares. Rare ! How he talkes in verse, just as he writes !

Chro. When have I walk't the streets, but happy he
That had the finger first to point at mee,
Prentice, or Journeyman ! The shop doth know it !

The unletter'd Clarke ! *major* and *minor* Poet !
 The Sempster hath sate still as I pass'd by,
 And dropt her needle ! Fish-wives staid their cry :
 The Boy with buttons, and the Basket-wench !
 To vent their wares into my workes do trench !
 A pudding-wife that would despise the Times,
 Hath utter'd frequent pen'worths, through my rimes,
 And, with them, div'd into the Chamber-maid,
 And she unto her Lady hath convay'd
 The season'd morsels, who hath sent me pensions,
 To cherish, and to heighten my inventions.
 Well, *Fame* shall know it yet, I have my faction,
 And friends about me, though it please detraction
 To doe me this affront. Come forth that love me,
 And now, or never, spight of *Fame*, approve me.

Here the third stage direction occurs :

[*At this the Mutes¹ come in.*

THE ANTIMASQUERS.

Fame. How now ! what's here ? Is hell broke loose ?

Eies. You'll see

That he ha's favourers, *Fame*, and great ones too.

That unctuous Bounty is the Bosse of *Belinsgate*.

Eares. Who feasts his *Muse* with claret wine and oysters.

Nose. Growes big with *Satyre*.

Eares. Goes as long as an Elephant.

Eies. She labours, and lies in of his inventions.

Nose. Ha's a male-*poem* in her belly now, big as a colt.

¹ These Mutes are the friends of Chronomastix as distinct from the merely Curious.

Eares. That kicks at *Time* already.

Eies. And is no sooner foald, but will neigh sulphure.

Fame. The next?

Eares. A *quondam* Justice, that of late
Hath beene discarded out o' the pack o' the peace,
For some lewd levitie he holds in *capite*,
But constantly loves him. In dayes of yore
He us'd to give the charge out of his poems,
He carries him about him, in his pocket,
As *Philip's* Sonne did *Homer*, in a casket,
And cries, O happy Man, to the wrong party,
Meaning the Poet, where he meant the subject.

Fame. What are this paire?

Eies. The ragged rascalls?

Fame. Yes.

Eies. Meere rogues, you'd thinke them rogues, but they are friends.
One is his Printer in disguise, and keepe
His presse in a hollow tree, where to conceale him,
He workes by glow-worme light, the Moone's too open.
The other zealous ragge is the Compositor,
Who in an angle, where the ants inhabite,
(The *emblems* of his labours) will sit curl'd
Whole dayes and nights, and worke his eyes out for him.

Nose. Strange arguments of love! There is a Schoolemaster
Is turning all his workes too, into *Latine*,
To pure *Satyricke Latine*; makes his Boyes
To learne him; calls him the times *Juvenal*;
Hangs all his Schoole with his sharpe sentences;
And o're the Execution place hath painted
Time whipt, for terror to the Infanterie.

Eies. This Man of warre, i' the rere, He is both Trumpet
And Champion to his *Muse*.

Eares. For the whole City.

Nose. H'as him by roat, recites him at the tables,
Where he doth governe ; sweares him into name
Upon his word, and sword, for the sole youth
Dares make profession of *Poetick* truth,
Now militant amongst us. To th' incredulous,
That dagger is an article he uses
To rivet his respect into their pates,
And make them faithful. *Fame*, you'l find you 'ave wronged
him.

Fame. What a confederacie of *Folly* is here !

Here the fourth stage direction occurs :

[They all daunce but *Fame*, and make the first *Anti-masque*,
in which they adore, and carry forth the *Satyre*, and
the *Curious* come up agen.

Eies. Now *Fame*, how like you this ?

Eares. This falls upon you
For your neglect.

Nose. He scornes you, and defies you.
H'as got a *Fame* on 's owne, as well as a Faction.

Eies. And these will deifie him, to despite you.

Fame. I envie not the *Apotheosis*.
'Twill prove but deifying of a Pompion.

Nose. Well, what is that the *Time* will now exhibite ?

Eies. What gambols ? What devises ? What new sports ?

Eares. You promis'd us we should have anything.

Nose. That *Time* would give us all we could imagine.

*

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Fame. You do abuse the *Time*. These are fit freedoms
For lawlesse Prentices, on a Shrove-tuesday,
When they compell the *Time* to serve their riot.
For drunken Wakes, and strutting Beare-baytings,
That savour only of their owne abuses.

Eies. Why, if not those, then something to make sport.

Eares. Wee only hunt for novelty, not truth.

Fame. I'le fit you though the *Time* faintly permit it.

Here comes the fifth stage direction :

[The second *Anti-masque* of Tumblers and Juglers, brought
in by the cat and fiddle, who make sport with the
Curious, and drive them away.

Fame. Why now they are kindly us'd, like such spectators,
That know not what they would have. Commonly
The curious are ill-natur'd, and like flies,
Seeke *Times* corrupted parts to blow upon :
But may the sound ones live with fame, and honour,
Free from molestation of these insects :
Who being fled, *Fame* now persues her errand.

Here follows the sixth stage direction :

[Loud *Musique*. To which the whole scene opens, where
Saturne sitting with *Venus* is discover'd above, and
certaine *Votaries* comming forth below, which are the
Chorus.

Fame. To you, great King, to whom the *Time* doth owe
All his respects and reverence, behold
How *Saturne*, urged at request of *Love*,
Prepares the object to the place to-night

Within yound' darknesse, *Venus* hath found out
That *Hecate* (as she is Queene of shades)
Keepes certaine glories of the *Time* obscur'd
There, for herselfe alone to gaze upon,
As she did once the faire *Endimion*.
These *Time* hath promis'd at *Love's* suit to free,
As being fitter to adorne the age,
By you restor'd on earth, most like his owne :
And fill this world of beautie here, your Court.
To which his bountie, see, how men prepare
To fit their votes below, and thronging come
With longing passion to enjoy th' effect !
Harke, it is *Love* begins to *Time*. Expect.

Venus.

Beside that it is done for *Love*,
It is a worke, great *Time*, will prove
Thy honour, as men's hopes above.

Saturne.

If *Love* be pleased, so am I :
For *Time* could never yet deny
What *Love* did aske, if *Love* knew why.

Votaries.

Shee knew, and hath exprest it now.
And so doth every publike vow
That heard her why, and waites thy how.

Saturne.

You shall not long expect : with ease
The things come forth, are borne to please.
Looke, have you seene such lights as these ?

Here follows the seventh stage direction, ushering in the "Disclosure":

[The *Masquers* are discovered, and that which obscur'd them vanisheth.

Votaries.

These, these must sure some wonders bee!

Chorus.

O, what a glory 'tis to see

Men's wishes, *Time* and *Love* agree.

At this point there was to be "a pause," during which:

[*Saturne* and *Venus* passe away, and the *Masquers* descend.

Chorus.

What griefe, or envie had it beene,

That these, and such had not beene seene,

But still obscur'd in shade!

Who are the glories of the *Time*,

Of Youth, and feature too, the prime,

And for the light were made!

Votaries.

1. Their very number, how it takes!

2. What harmony their presence makes!

3. How they inflame the place!

Chorus.

Now they are neerer scene, and viewd;

For whom could *Love* have better su'd?

Or *Time* have done the grace?

[Here, to a loud *Musique*, they march into their figure, and daunce their *Entry*, or first *Daunce*, after which

Venus.

The night could not these glories misse,
Good *Time*, I hope, is ta'ne with this.

The “maine *Daunce*” follows, its progress being interrupted now and again by a merry dialogue between *Cupid* and *Sport*, in order to allow the “young Blouds” who joined in the dance to take breath. After the main dance came the *Revels*, and after them :

[The *Chorus* appeare agen, and *Diana* (Hecate) descends to *Hippolitus*, the whole scene being chang'd to a *Wood*, out of which he comes.

Chorus.

The Courtly strife is done, it should appeare,
Betweene the Youths, and Beauties of the yeare.
Wee hope that now these lights will know their sphere,
And strive hereafter to shine ever here :
Like brightest Planets, still to move
In th' eye of *Time*, and orbs of *Love*.

* * * * *

Diana (addressing *Hippolitus*).

Your Goddess hath beene wrong'd to-night
By *Loves* report unto the *Time*.

Hippolitus.

The injury itselfe will right,
Which only *Fame* hath made a crime.
For *Time* is wise,
And hath his eares as perfect as his eyes.

Saturne.

Who's that descends? *Diana?*

Votaries.

Yes.

Venus.

By like her troope shee hath begun to misse.

Saturne.

Let's meet, and question what her errand is.

This brings us to the middle of the "Close." Hippolitus on behalf of his mistress (Diana) indignantly denies that she had any thought of defrauding "the *Time*" of any glories that were his. The "Queene of shades" herself vouchsafes to explain that her purpose in secluding the afore-said "glories of the *Time*" was to "make them fitter so to serve the *Time*," and qualify them for translation to the heavens as so many new "starres." The "Close" winds up with a deprecation of malice and implacableness:

Turne, Hunters then, agen,
But not of men.
Follow his ample,
And just example,
That hates all chace of malice and of bloud.

* * * * *

Man should not hunt Mankind to death,
But strike the enemies of Man ;
Kill vices if you can :
They are your wildest beasts.
And when they thickest fall, you make the Gods true
feasts.

THE END.

CHAPTER VII.

CRITICISM OF THE PRINCE'S MASQUE

THE “man of warre i’ the rere,” one of the class of poetry-struck “martialists” dear to Elizabethan literature, reminds one of Gullio in the *Returne from Parnassus*, “a man of war and a schollar” who “worshipps sweet Mr. Shakspeare,” and sleeps with *Venus and Adonis* under his pillow. But our chief concern is with the leader of the band of “Mutes” who at Chronomastix’s bidding come forward to befriend him. For Chronomastix has his “favourers, and great ones too,” though Fame, not mere “rumor,” calls him “impostor,” “braggart,” “scorne of all the Muses.” Foremost among these (silent) favourers is one described as “the Bosse of Belingsgate.” A sort of barrel¹ it would seem, a poet also

¹ Compare for instance :

Why, though I seeme of a prodigious wast,
I am not so voluminous, and vast,
But there are lines, wherewith I might b’ embraced.
’Tis true, as my wombe swells, so my backe stoupes,
And the whole lumpe growes round, deform’d, and droupes,
But yet the Tun at Heidelberg had houpes.

The Underwood (The Poet to the Painter).

and satirist, who "feasts his Muse with claret wine and oysters" whenever he has the chance. Students of Ben Jonson will have no difficulty in recognising the original of this redoubtable ally of Chronomastix. But who was Chronomastix that Jonson should be willing to pose as the leader of his "faction"? Again, what is the necessary connection between the comic and the serious part of the Masque? Both these difficulties might perhaps be met by regarding Chronomastix as a caricature of Saturn or Time. But as the piece presents other difficulties which cannot be so met, we must cast about for other clues.

The leader of the "Mutes" who as already intimated, does duty for Jonson himself, is on the point of being delivered of a "male-poem," the "colt," not of a "hoby-horse," not of "the Pegasus that uses to wait on Warwick Muses,"¹ but of a true Pegasus, heaven-born, earth-spurning. Is there anything of Jonson's belonging to this period which satisfies this description? Nothing that I know of except the Ode to Shakespeare.² And what was the

¹ Such are the terms in which Jonson alludes to Warwick(shire) poets in 1626. See *Masque of Owls*.

² As to date in particular, the "Bosse" of the Masque must have been shaping his "male-poem" some time before Twelfth Night 1623; and at that time Jonson was probably busy with his Ode to Shakespeare.

purpose of the Ode to Shakespeare? Very much the same as that of the *Prince's Masque*. Even the comic element of the Masque has its counterpart in the banter¹ of the Ode. While the serious business of the Masque, namely the vindication of Time from the imputation of barrenness, is represented in the Ode by the exulting challenge to the earlier civilizations of Greece and Rome which finishes :

Triumph, my Britaine, thou hast one to shoue,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time !
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charme !

Again, the apotheosis idea which plays so important a part in the Masque proper, has found its way into the Ode. So also Diana's excuse² for having (temporarily) secluded these "youths," strikes the

¹ "Shake a stage," "shake a lance," "brandish 't in the eyes of ignorance." (What ignorance? That of the "ignorant admirers" with whom Fame bade Chronomastix "go revell"?) A less obvious instance of chaff is the much canvassed "small Latin and less Greek" passage.

² Her excuse being that she wished to make them "fitter" for their future functions by "labour," "arts," etc.

same note as the following passage from the Ode :

Yet must I not give Nature all ; thy art¹
 My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part,
 For though the poet's matter Nature be,
 His art doth give the fashion ! and that he,
 Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
 (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat,
 Upon the Muses' anvil etc.

But what it will be said, does all this make for ? Are we to infer that the subject of the Masque is intimately related to the subject of the Ode ? If so, we are on the track of yet another act of homage to Shakespeare in 1623, and shall find our reward in a further investigation of the two works. To begin with the Masque. Fame is tongue-tied by the presence of the Curious, and will not "pursue" her "errand" until these have been got rid of. Why ? Evidently because they (the Curious) are apt to be "ill-natur'd and like flies, seeke Time's corrupted parts to blow upon." The Curious² having

¹ The candour of the conversations with Drummond in which Jonson seems to have said that "Shakespeare wanted arte," would have been out of place here.

² Observe here another analogy between Masque and Ode. The serious business of the Masque is arrested by fear of "ill will." The serious business of the Ode is arrested by fear of "envy."

been finally excluded, the climax of the Masque is reached. (See p. 112.) "The whole scene opens" to the sound of "loud musique," and Fame pointing to "yond' darknesse," informs King James that Love personified by the lover of Adonis, has discovered that "certaine glories of the Time" are kept there "obscur'd." The Chorus of Votaries which is intended to reflect the excitement of the audience is in a fever of expectancy. The "darknesse" vanishes, and—what is revealed? A statue of Shakespeare, so life-like that "one would speak to it and stand in hope of answer"? Or his picture, in which the artist instead of striving to "out-doo the life"¹ had done it to perfection? Or Jonson himself holding the First Folio in his hands and declaiming, "Soul of the age! The applause! Delight! The wonder of our stage! My Shakespeare, rise"; etc.? No. Neither statue, nor picture, nor Jonson is there. All that we can discern is—a group of young men in the ordinary evening dress of the period? The acknowledged head of English

¹ See the grotesque lines to the frontispiece of the First Folio:

This figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the graver has a strife
With nature, to out-doo the life etc.

literature has undertaken to prove that Time is as vigorous now as he was in the days of "insolent Greece and haughty Rome"; and are these his *pièces justificatives*? Yet the Chorus and Votaries are in raptures, and greet the newly-disclosed "glories of the Time":

Of youth, and feature too, the prime,

* * * *

Their very number, how it takes!

What harmony their presence makes!

How they inflame the place!

Moreover, note the costumes. What specially distinguishes the wearers from the never-failing stream of "young blouds" who have preceded and are likely to follow them, are the fancy costumes they have donned for the nonce. Now one of the pet fictions of the editor (or editors) of the First Folio is that the numerous issue of Shakespeare's brain are there for the first time "offer'd to your view cur'd and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers as he conceived them." That was untrue; for Shakespeare's issue as there set forth were by no means "perfect of their limbes." Still it suited the editor's purpose to say that they

were; and taking him at his word, the analogy between the Disclosure of the *Prince's Masque* and the practically simultaneous Disclosure of the First Folio is obvious. But if Shakespeare were as much the subject of the Masque as of the Ode, what of Chronomastix? I reply, the burlesque figure of Chronomastix¹ was adjusted to Shakespeare much as the Comic History of England is adjusted to the true. Are there any signs of such adjustment? I would point to the passage in which Chronomastix is made to inform his "ignorant admirers" that his "glorious front, and word at large, triumphs in print at his admirers' charge." If this be not a satirical allusion to the First Folio (which as the Dedication tells, was published "without ambition either of selfe profit or fame") and its precious "figure,"² the literary trick which we call satirical allusion must have been entirely unknown to Ben Jonson. Some of the adjustments, however, are less obvious. A schoolmaster for example, is engaged in turning "all his (Chronomastix's) workes" from the insular

¹ The alternative supposition that Chronomastix was a superfluous buffoon would be an insult to Jonson's intelligence.

² Between this and the Stratford bust it has, I think, been said that the "main point of resemblance is the baldness on the top of the head!"

English in which they were originally written into the general or continental "Latine." Whether this schoolmaster was intended to represent Camden or another, we need not stop to inquire. But what were the "workes" he was turning into Latin? When Jonson published his own plays in 1616 he named them his *Workes*.¹ Supposing Shakespeare had thought it worth while to publish his plays, would he have called them his *Workes*? Sports rather, or Toys, or perhaps Trifles, judging from the emphatic repetition of the latter word in the Dedication of the First Folio.² *Poesis* or "making" must have been recreation rather than work to Shakespeare. But that would not have been his only reason for calling the plays Trifles rather than Works. May there not have been other productions of his which did not "with ease . . . come forth,"

¹ Suckling commented upon the title of Jonson's First Folio of 1616:

The first that broke silence was good old Ben,
 Prepar'd before with Canary wine;
 And he told them plainly that he deserv'd the bays,
 For his were call'd Works, where others were but plays.

—*Sessions of the Poets.*

² "The reading of these trifles": "we name them trifles": "to thinke these trifles": all these phrases occur within two or three lines of each other in the Dedication to Earls Pembroke and Montgomery. As to Toys, compare "these things" (masques etc.) "are but *Toyes*."—*Bacon's Essays*, 1625.

and which he was in the habit of calling his Works by way of distinction? A letter written by a concealed poet about the middle of this year (1623) would answer the question at once, if Shakespeare held the pen which wrote :

It is true (so runs the letter) my labours are now most set to have those works which I had formerly published (here comes an enumeration of the works, all of them in prose, to which he referred) well translated into Latin by the help of some good pens which forsake me not. For these modern languages will at one time or other play the bankrowtes with books: and since I have lost much time with this age, I would be glad as God shall give me leave to recover it with posterity.

Another of these adjustments is associated with Mute No. 2, the "quondam justice." In an ecstasy of delight with his favourite poems and meaning to congratulate their author, this rather disreputable "favourer" of Chronomastix cries, "O happy man," to the wrong party. On the hypothesis that Chronomastix was intended as a caricature of Shakespeare, the suggestion here is that it was a matter of common occurrence for Shakespeare's admirers to mistake some other "party" for the "poet" himself, the "subject" (see p. 110) of the Masque.

Once more. If Shakespeare was the subject of the *Prince's Masque*, both Masque and Ode, and in a sense the First Folio itself, were parts of one great and probably unparalleled compliment, of which the author of the famous *Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* was the hero, King James and Prince Charles especially the latter the prime movers, and Ben Jonson the principal agent. In the paying of compliments however, to time them is of the first importance. To what event or combination of events nearly concerning Shakespeare was this great compliment timed? Was Shakespeare the victim in the opinion of King and Prince and Court, of some malicious persecution? Had he fallen as Wolsey fell, and were there those who "wept to see him so little of himself"? There is a pathetic letter to King James of about this date, which if written by Shakespeare would fit the case exactly.¹ After having comforted himself with the thought that his fall was not the "act" of his Sovereign, the writer proceeds:

For now it is thus with me; I am a year and a half old in misery; . . . Mine own means through mine own

¹ After having written it, the writer seems to have judged it unworthy of him, as indeed it was.

improvidence are poor and weak . . . My dignities remain marks of your favour, but burdens of my present fortune. The poor remnants which I had of my former fortunes in plate and jewels, I have spread upon poor men unto whom I owed, scarcely leaving myself bread. So as to conclude, I must pour out my misery before your Majesty, so far as to say, *Si deseris tu, perimus* . . . And why should I not think but that thrice noble prince (Charles), who would have pulled me out of the fire of a sentence, will help to pull me out of the mire of an abject and sordid condition in my last days? . . . And as all commiserable persons (specially such as find their hearts void of all malice) are apt to think that all men pity them; so I assure myself that the Lords of your Council, . . . will . . . further advance your Majesty's goodness towards me . . . For I have been often told by many of my Lords, as it were in excusing the severity of the sentence, that they knew they left me in good hands. . . . Help me, dear Sovereign, Lord and Master, and pity me, so far as I that have borne a bag, be not now in my age forced in effect to bear a wallet; nor I that desire to live to study may not be driven to study to live.

These are the words of one to whose wounded mind royal and courtly sympathy would have been as balm. True, says the puzzled inquirer, but it would be news to me that Shakespeare had any hand in that letter. You put me in mind, I reply, of an application I had intended to make to Ben

Jonson. In a pre-scientific age there were difficulties, greatly exaggerated no doubt by Virgil and others, in the way of parleying with the dead. In these days of wireless telegraphy the human voice will surely reach from here to Hades as easily as across the English Channel. Suppose we signal the old man whether he is in the humour for a sort of telephonic conference. If not, we can hint at the possibility of a personal interview, which to one long unaccustomed to any but attenuated sounds would doubtless be afflictive in the extreme. . . . Though overdue at a gathering of the Tribe of Ben at the Mermaid's Shadow, he consents to grant us thirty minutes. Tell him you are interested in the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy. He refers you to his "Sweet Swan of Avon"¹ as evidence that Bacon² could not have been the subject of at least one part of our supposed great compliment? Obviously then he takes you for one of the Curious, and would put you off the scent. As you are not

¹ Sweet Swan of Avon! What a sight it were,
To see thee etc.

² He was the writer of both the letters just quoted. The undignified one is given in *Baconiana*, 1679, pp. 45-52: the other containing "It is true my labours are now most set" etc. in *Bacon's Works*, edition Spedding xiv, p. 429.

prepared for a full discussion of the points (both ethical and critical) involved in the line to which he refers, you had best ask his attention to this :

Leave thee alone, for the comparison
Of all, that insolent Greece or haughtie Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.

* * * * *

He was not of an age, but for all time !
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When like Apollo he came forth to warme
Our eares, or like a Mercury to charme !¹
Nature her selfe was proud of his designes,
And joy'd to weare the dressing of his lines !
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit.

* * * * *

Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage ;
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd like night
And despaire day, but for thy Volumes light.

Now remind him of his “Discovery” entitled
Scriptorum Catalogus :

We (in England) have had many (wits) and in their
severall Ages (to take in but the former seculum), Sir

¹ Here Apollo is the patron of poetry and music ; Mercury the patron of the Orator, or “Speaker.” Compare the “Discovery,” *De Claris Oratoribus*, given in a subsequent note.

Thomas Moore, the elder Wiat, Henry Earle of Surrey . . . were for their times admirable ; and the more, because they began Eloquence¹ with us. . . . Sir Philip Sidney and Mr. Hooker (in different matter) grew great Masters of wit and language . . . Lord Egerton, the Chancellor, a grave and great orator. . . . But his learned and able (though unfortunate) Successor is he, who hath fill'd up all numbers and perform'd that in our tongue, which may be compar'd or preferr'd either to insolent Greece or haughty Rome. In short, within his view, and about his times, were all the wits borne, that could honour a language, or helpe study. Now things daily fall ; wits grow downeward and Eloquence² growes backward. So that hee may be nam'd and stand as the marke and akme of our language.

Ask him to explain the striking coincidences there, and as the Ode preceded the "Discovery," tax him with having deposed Shakespeare in order to place Bacon on the throne. Do you hear him muttering something about the stupidity of his friends in including the two utterances in the same volume?

¹ Eloquence here refers rather to writing than to speaking.

² Eloquence here bears just the same meaning as before. A previous "Discovery" *De Claris Oratoribus*, had done ample justice to Bacon as a speaker. "His language (where he could spare, or passe by a jest) was nobly censorious. . . . No member of his speech, but consisted of the owne graces. His hearers could not cough, or looke aside from him, without loss. . . . The feare of every man that heard him was, lest hee should make an end."

Our telephonic apparatus is marvellously sensitive, for he probably did not mean these words to be overheard. However you may as well assure him that his personal friends were not to blame, they having taken care to exclude one of the two utterances, viz. the Ode, from their collected edition of his Works. Without waiting for an answer, refer him to this other "Discovery" of his :

Poetry in this latter Age, hath prov'd but a mean Mistresse, to such as have wholly addicted themselves to her; or given their names up to her family. They who have but saluted her on the by; and now and then tendred their visits, shee hath done much for, and advanced in the way of their owne professions (both the Law, and the Gospel) beyond all they could have hoped or done for themselves, without her favour. Wherein she doth emulate the judicious, but preposterous bounty of the times Grande(e)s: who accumulate all they can upon the Parasite, or Freshman in their friendship; but think an old Client, or honest servant, bound by his place to write, and starve.

Now return to the subject of the two summits or pinnacles of the world of letters, him of the Ode and—Bacon. Say you are curious to know which of the two he (Jonson) was thinking of when he flung the above reproach at "Poetry in this latter age." He will certainly hesitate to say he was not

thinking of Shakespeare.¹ He will also hesitate to deny that he was thinking of that "learned and able though unfortunate" chancellor, who though once an ardent admirer of poetry, could not be brought to give "his name up to her family." The question is an inconvenient one, and the minutes are flying. Tell him that political disaffection to the Monarchy will not now be increased by the knowledge that under it a great poet was once pro-

I say "certainly," because the "Discovery" just quoted follows close upon a disparaging allusion to certain poets of "our age" who "have been loved for nothing but their vices" (poetical), and is itself followed almost immediately by "I remember, the Players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare, that in his writing (whatsoever he penn'd) hee never blotted out line. My answer hath beene, would he had blotted a thousand. Which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted, and to justifie mine owne candor, for I loved the man and doe honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any. . . . But hee redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was ever more in him to be praysed, then to be pardoned." The passage probably refers less to the "Address" in which "Heminge and Condell" (who may have received no "papers" whatever from Shakespeare) are made to say "Wee have scarce received from him a blot in his papers," than to a common tradition about the unerring rapidity of Shakespeare's mind. The startling contrast between this "candor" (which agrees with the Drummond Conversations before cited) and the unstinted praise of the Ode, is by no means inexplicable. The Ode was probably composed in a transport of repentant and grateful admiration. Not so the passage in question.

moted to the highest place in the legal profession. Tell him that the Great Instauration has nothing to fear from association with the "magic robes" which Prospero discarded. Assure him that the "Person" he professed to "reverence for the greatness that was only proper to himself" is more likely to gain than to lose by the fullest disclosure. Still no answer, and the minutes have run out. Alas! you have failed to convince the old man that you are not one of those "ignorant admirers," the Curious. And he has evidently made up his mind that you are content like them, to assist at the "deifying of a Pompion."

Shakespeare's apparent indifference to the fate of his intellectual offspring was due I suppose to a variety of causes, some operating most strongly in youth, some in middle age, and some at the close of life. Among those already suggested, fear of giving offence to friends and relations would be one of the earliest, devotion to natural philosophy one of the latest to develop.

The latest and not the least efficacious has yet to be indicated :

It is a sentence of sacred authority that he that is dead is freed from sin; because he cannot in that state which is

without the body, sin any more; but he that writes idle books makes for himself another body in which he lives and sins after death as fast and as foul as ever he did in his life: which consideration deserves to be a sufficient antidote against this foul disease. And here because I would prevent a just censure by my free confession, I must remember that I myself have for many years together languished of this very sickness; and it is no long time since I have recovered (a severe illness was the occasion of this recovery). But blessed be God for it I have by His saving assistance, suppress my greatest follies, and those which escaped from me are I think as innoxious as most of that vein use to be. What I speak of them is truth; but let no man mistake it for an extenuation of faults as if I intended an apology for them or myself. . . . If the world will be so charitable as to grant my request I do here most humbly and earnestly beg that none would read them. . . . The first that with any effectual success attempted a diversion of this foul and over-flowing stream (of vain and vicious books) was the blessed man Mr. George Herbert, whose holy life and verse gained many pious converts, of whom I am the least; and gave the first check to a most flourishing and admired Wit of his time.

So wrote Henry Vaughan in the preface of his *Silex Scintillans*, 1655. What if Shakespeare were the greatest of those "pious converts" of whom Vaughan professed himself "the least!" Many things are more unlikely. Bacon, we are told, "put such a value on" George Herbert's judgment,

that he usually desired his approbation before he would expose any of his books to be printed, and thought him so worthy of his friendship that having translated many of the prophet David's Psalms into English verse, he made George Herbert his patron by a public dedication of them to him, as the best judge of divine poetry.¹

George Herbert on his side apostrophised Bacon as "Colleague of Apollo," "Literary Brutus," "River of sweet speech," and so forth.²

¹ *Life of Mr. George Herbert*, by IZAAK WALTON.

² *Manes Verulamiani*, ante p. 51, note 2.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX.

MR. WILLIAM SHAKSPERE OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON IN THE COUNTIE OF WARWICK GENT

"My verie honored Lord. The manie good offices I have received at yr Lordships handes . . . onely imbouldeneth me to require more . . . This which now presseth is to request yr Lordship in all you can to be good to the poore players of the Blacke ffryers . . . They are threatened by the Lord Maior and Aldermen of London, never friendly to their calling, with the distruccion of their meanes of livelihood . . . These bearers are two of the chiefe of the companie; one of them by name Richard Burbidge who humblie sueth for your Lordships kinde helpe, for that he is a man famous as our English Roscius one who fitteth the action to the worde and the word to the action most admirably . . . The other is a man no whitt lesse deserving favor, and my especial friende, till of late an actor of good account in the Cumpanie, now a sharer in the same, and writer of some of our best English playes, which as yr Lordship knoweth, were most singularly liked of Queene Elizabeth, when the Cumpanie was called uppon to performe before her Majestie at Court at Christmas and Shrovetide . . . This other hath to name William Shakespeare, and they are both of one Countie, and indeed allmost of one towne: both are right famous in their qualities though it longeth not of yr Lo gravitie and wisdomes to resort unto the places where they are wont to delight the publike eare . . . your Lo most bounden at com :

Copia Vera

H. S."¹

¹ This H. S. was supposed to stand for Lord Southampton.

The late Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps in his *Life of William Shakespeare*, 1848, presented his readers with a facsimile of part of this *copia vera*, which he then regarded as a "genuine manuscript of the period," and "perhaps the most interesting document relating to Shakespeare yet discovered." Dyce pronounced it a "manifest fabrication," and as neither facsimile nor notice of it is to be found in the later editions of the *Life of Shakespeare*, Halliwell-Phillipps seems to have acquiesced in Dyce's opinion. So obvious indeed are the marks of fraud or jest, that without presupposing a fury for personal details, it would be difficult to understand how "anyone acquainted with such matters" should have taken the thing at its face value.¹

But why this craving for more personal details about the "gentleman" with the dozen or so of name-forms of which Shaxpere perhaps was one of the most common? Is the available material so scanty or so fascinating as to make one hunger for more? The modern schoolboy, unaware of the illiterate condition of petty country towns like Stratford-on-Avon in 1580-1620, will be apt to conclude that inability to read or write ran in the Shakspere family. Thanks to the industry of his votaries, we know that his father was a "marksman" (*i.e.* a person unable to write) and his mother

¹ It may have been a pious fraud (of which Halliwell-Phillipps was by no means the only victim) to increase the stock of raw material for a Shakespeare biography. Had it been of early date—say 1615—I should have said it was the device of some wag intent on poking fun at Shakespeare for having (formerly) soiled his hands by catering for the public stage (compare "Thence comes it that my name receives a brand," Sonnet 111).

a "markswoman."¹ William Shakspeare's wife besides being unable to write, was "most probably" unable "to read a line of his works."² One of their two daughters, Judith, was a "markswoman." Susanna the other, though she could sign her name, may not have been equal to the task of writing or reading a letter.³ And William's own autographs, all of them more or less cramped and amorphous, are not such as to bespeak a hand familiar with the use of the pen. And William, we are told, was "the best of his family."⁴ Credible tradition will have it that he was apprenticed to a Stratford butcher; that accident or hard times or both together drove him to London about 1585-7; that he chose as a suitable occupation that of ostler or caretaker of the horses of well-to-do theatre-goers during performances. From tending horses outside, he seems somehow or other to have found his way to the inside of the theatre, and in course of time to have developed into an actor capable of sustaining fourth-rate parts in a passable and even creditable manner. In an official warrant (of 1603) relating to one of

¹ Doubtless the worthy couple were quite as well educated as most of the folk whether old or young, male or female, by whom they were surrounded. Mr. Sidney Lee says, "There is evidence in the Stratford archives that he (John Shakspeare) could write with facility." (*Life of W. Shakespeare*, p. 5.) One would like to know what sort of evidence. John certainly made his "mark" at times in preference to signing his name.

² *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, by J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps, 5th ed. p. 240.

³ *Outlines etc.* pp. 232-3.

⁴ A person called Dowdall writing in 1693 is our authority for this piece of information. *Outlines etc.* pp. 469-70.

the theatres¹ his name is preceded by that of a nobody called Lawrence Fletcher, the officials responsible for the document being content to assume that Fletcher was if anything Shakspeare's superior. Again, if anyone was likely to know the truth about Shakspeare, Richard Burbage was the man. In 1636 the Burbages, Richard's wife and son and brother, had to solicit the aid of the Lord Chamberlain, and if they had been aware of any unusual excellence in Shakspeare they would naturally have directed attention to it in their petition. Yet all they consider themselves justified in saying about Shakspeare is: "wee . . . built the Globe . . . and to ourselves we joyned those deserving men Shakspeare, Hemings, Condall, Philips and others . . . Now for the Blackfriars . . . (we) placed men players which were Hemings, Condall, Shakspeare" etc.² Another and probably more profitable business to which Mr. Shakspeare seems to have addicted himself was that of broker or negociator of loans.³ What else he may have done during his residence in London⁴ we shall perhaps never know for certain. He retired, it is thought, to the place of his birth somewhere between 1609-13, with silver in his hair it may be, and certainly with gold in his purse, but otherwise

¹ *Outlines* etc. p. 480.

² *Ibid.* p. 277.

³ *Ibid.* p. 138.

⁴ We may safely ignore the tradition, presumption, or what not, that he somehow contrived to crowd into the early years of his residence in London a training for the legal profession. That the author of *Lucrece* must have been desirous of showing that he had not wholly neglected his legal opportunities I take to be proved by that poem alone, so frequent and so significant are its legal phrases, allusions, and suggestions. But the question of Shakespeare's legal equipment belongs to the text, not to the appendix.

apparently very little changed either for the better or for the worse. In 1614-15 he seems to have interested himself keenly in a paltry enclosure scheme which happened to be then agitating the rustic community of Stratford. That he ever cherished any ambition more exalted than that of being allowed to add squire to his name; that it ever occurred to him that he owned any right to, power over, or interest in such a thing as a manuscript; that he possessed or wished to possess anything in the shape of a library; that he had acquired a taste for poetry or prose, history or philosophy; on all these points we have abundance of conjecture indeed, but of evidence fit to be trusted practically not one tittle. There is reason to believe that he was in good health as late as March 1616,¹ and that his death took place suddenly—perhaps from pneumonia—about the 23rd of the following month. His “last Will and Testament” is irredeemably *banal*. His plate, except the “brod silver and gilt bole” bequeathed to his daughter Judith, has the unusual distinction of being specifically bequeathed twice over, first to his “Niece Elizabeth Hall” (absolutely), and then to his “Sonne in iaw John Hall gent” and John Hall’s wife Susanna. Even his “second best bed” and the “furniture” thereof are not forgotten. “New Place” cannot have been entirely destitute of books; but its few odd volumes would feel no surprise on finding themselves rated by their owner and his lawyer as “goodes chattels and household stuffe.” As there seem to have been

¹ The Will declares that he was in “perfect health,” an expression which would almost certainly have been challenged by the testator if his health had been bad.

neither writings nor papers, nothing in short that a village furniture broker would have been incompetent to deal with, it is unlikely that literary executors were ever even thought of.¹ Richard Burbage was to have a memorial ring and so were "Hemynges" and "Cundell." But about Ben Jonson, or any other author famous or obscure, this afflicting Will is altogether silent.

Details like these, all of them more or less squalid as far as things of the mind are concerned, abound in the Shakspeare record. Yet the gaps in that record are even more significant than the contents.² How is it for example that we know next to nothing of the man Shakspeare's mode of life in London during the period of his supposed literary triumphs? Can we be sure that any one of his sayings there was ever thought worthy of being preserved? You inquire, what company did he keep or affect? and you may get for answer, "It would seem as though Shakespeare's own impersonality—in so far as biographical fact is concerned—had a mysterious power of thinning away other personalities from whom light on him might have been looked for."³ Is

¹ Compare "It had bene a thing . . . to have bene wished that the author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth and overseen his owne writings." Heminge and Condell are made to say this in one of the First Folio addresses.

² The *copia vera*, if not a mere *jeu d'esprit*, indicates a desire to supply some of these gaps or omissions.

³ *Willobie's Avis* edited by Dr. Grosart, 1880. Compare Hallam's "To us Shakespeare is scarcely a determined person, a substantial reality of past time, the man Shakespeare." (*Lit. of Europe* ii, 383.) Also the late Professor Nichol's "Shakespeare in his person" is "in the main *nominis umbra*" (*Francis Bacon*, part i, 170). In this connexion

it at all certain that the owner of New Place ever wrote a letter to wife, child, lawyer, friend, or anyone else? What was he doing when all the notable poets in Great Britain were lamenting the death of Prince Henry? What, when the Princess Elizabeth was being married to the Elector Palatine?¹ Why did he quit the brilliant capital with its drama-loving court and the noble and eminent friends whom he is supposed to have attached to himself? Had he been yearning for the Stratford Avon ever since about 1587?² Ovid we know was exiled to barbarous Tomi. Was Shakspeare's departure from London as involuntary as that of Ovid?³ On the other hand is it conceivable that a man of any culture should willingly have exchanged the stimulating variety of London for the deadly dullness of Stratford with its Quineys, Harts, Sadlers, Walkers, Nashes, Greenes, Shaws, and the rest?⁴ Did his poetical friends, if

one would gladly know more about the Countess of Pembroke's letter referred to by Mr. Sidney Lee as containing the phrase, "We have the man Shakespeare with us." (*Life of W. Shakespeare*, p. 411, note.)

¹ Seven or eight of Shakespeare's plays were performed at Whitehall in May, 1613.

² In Shakespeare's works the Thames is often in view; not so the banks of the Avon.

³ Ill-health is out of the question. There is some evidence that he was "in perfect health" early in 1616, and no evidence at all that his health previous to 1616 had been bad or indifferent.

⁴ In the Stratford of those days, a Dogberry possessed of Shakspeare's income might have counted on passing not indeed for an esquire, but for a "gentleman" of considerable importance. One of the Quineys married Shakspeare's daughter Judith, kept a wine shop, and was fined for keeping it ill. One of the Harts, a hatter by trade, was Shakspeare's brother-in-law. One of the Sadlers (a baker?) was called Hamnet, and

he had any, lyrically deplore his resolution to leave them? Did his literary friends, if any, expostulate with him in prose or verse, Latin or English? For years the world of wit and letters would seem to have been as completely unconscious of Mr. Shakspeare's exit from life as it had been of his departure from London. No sound of regret that synchronises with either of those events can be said to have reached our attentive ears.¹ Yet we are stunned by the outburst of lamentation which followed quick on the death of Ben Jonson. Once more, not a line of Mr. Shakspeare's handwriting has yet been discovered, though every likely corner in Stratford, London, England, has been ransacked. In fine, though it might be imprudent to say that no one ever saw him in the act of composition—except in effigy—it certainly cannot be proved that English literature owes anything whatever to his pen, except perhaps the melli-

seems likely to have been godfather to William Shakspeare's only son Hamnet. Shakspeare was godfather to a William Walker, son of one Henry Walker, a mercer. One of the "complimentary legatees" under Shakspeare's Will was an Antony Nash, chiefly remarkable it would seem for having "busied himself much in agricultural matters." Thomas Greene was the half-educated town clerk of Stratford. A Julius Shaw, retailer of wool and yarn, was one of the witnesses to the Will. It may be added that Stratford was described by Garrick as "the most dirty, unseemly, ill-paved, wretched-looking town in all Britain." All this information about Stratford and its inhabitants is drawn from Halliwell-Phillipps' *Outlines* etc. (pp. 229, 222, 254, 189, 561, 341), except the Garrick item which comes from the *Life of William Shakespeare*, 1848, p. 285.

¹ I suppose it will hardly be contended that the Jonsonian Ode was composed as early as 1616.

fluous lines which "in his lifetime he ordered to be cut upon his tombstone":¹

"GOOD FREND, FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE,
TO DIG THE DUST ENCLOASED HERE;
BLEST BE THE MAN THAT SPARES THES STONES,
AND CURST BE HE THAT MOVES MY BONES."²

¹ It is William Hall, an Oxford graduate, who gives this item of news in a letter of 1694 (*Outlines* etc. p. 470).

² *Outlines* etc. pp. 224-5.

Postscript

THE foregoing text, notes, and appendix (except additions to footnote 1, p. 140, and footnote 2, p. 144) were written long before I could have the advantage of reading Mr. Sidney Lee's *Life of William Shakespeare*, or his article, *Shakespeare* in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Indeed, the substance of my *Essay* belongs to the years 1884-5.

The most striking passage in Mr. Lee's *Life* is that which occurs on pp. 278-9: Shakespeare's "literary practices and aims were those of contemporary men of letters, and the difference in the quality of his work and theirs was due, not to conscious endeavour on his part to act otherwise than they, but to the magic and involuntary working of his genius. He seemed unconscious of his marvellous superiority to his professional comrades. . . . His literary attainments and successes were chiefly valued as serving the prosaic end of providing permanently for himself and his daughters. His highest ambition was to restore among his fellow-townsmen the family repute which his father's misfortunes had imperilled."

If with the majority we assume that "Mr. Shakspeare" was the true author of the plays collected in the First Folio, we shall sooner or later have to admit the finality of Mr. Lee's view and Pope's:

For gain, not glory, winged his roving flight,
And grew immortal in his own despite.

A "homely ideal" truly, possessing maybe a sort of fascination for some minds! But was "Mr. Shakspeare" a person of any note outside the parish of Stratford? Those who answer with an unqualified "No" are not necessarily committed to the Bacon hypothesis. It is conceivable—however unlikely—that some other may yet be discovered which shall equally satisfy the given conditions.

Of great though minor interest are the passages in which Mr. Lee contends for Stratfordian reminiscences in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and *2 Henry IV* (See *Life of W. S.* pp. 164 *et seq.*). Mr. Lee would identify Burton Heath in the *Shrew* Induction with "Barton-on-the-Heath, the home of Shakespeare's aunt." But were there no Burton Heaths which would fit the case better? So with "Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot." Were there not many Hackets in other parts of the country besides those living at Wincot within four miles of Stratford? As for this Stratford Wincot, it is obvious on Mr. Lee's own showing, that another Wincot (spelt Wilnecote) near Tamworth has a better claim to be identified with Shakespeare's Wincot, the Tamworth Wincot being celebrated for its ale in those days much as Burton-on-Trent is in these. That there should have been a Stephen Sly or Slie at Stratford in Shakespeare's time is certainly curious. The surname however, besides being common enough in other parts of the country, was probably suggested to Shakespeare by the old *Shrew* Play, which he is supposed to have rehandled in the *Shrew* we know best.

The Stratfordian suggestions in *2 Henry IV* are hardly convincing. Gloucestershire with its Wincot and Cotswolds

etc., may of course have been known to "Mr. Shakspeare," but must have been familiar to multitudes of people, particularly such as had friends connected with Wales or the Welsh Marches.

Briefly then, the existence of unmistakable reminiscences of Stratford appears to be still an open question. Should further evidence settle that question in the affirmative, the explanation from my point of view would be that for local colour Shakespeare occasionally had recourse to a trusty dependent.¹

In a note to p. 370 of the *Life*, Mr. Lee addresses himself to the coincidence between Bacon's and Shakespeare's misquotations of Aristotle (*ante*, p. 22). Assuming for argument's sake, the accuracy of all Mr. Lee advances as to the frequency and inward propriety of the rendering of Aristotle's word *political* by the English word *moral*, the fact remains that Bacon and Shakespeare appear to have followed the same track of reading in regard to Aristotle, and that residual fact is not a little out of keeping with the Stratford man's biographical record.

E. W. S.

Rome, March, 1899.

¹ This dependent may have carried complaisance so far as to relieve his patron from the inconvenience of appearing to hold shares in a (prosperous) theatrical syndicate.

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